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THE HOMES, HAUNTS, AND BATTLEFIELDS

OF THE

COVENANTERS

BY

A. B. TODD

AUTHOR OF "THE CIRCLING YEAR;" "POEMS, LECTURES, AND MISCELLANIES"

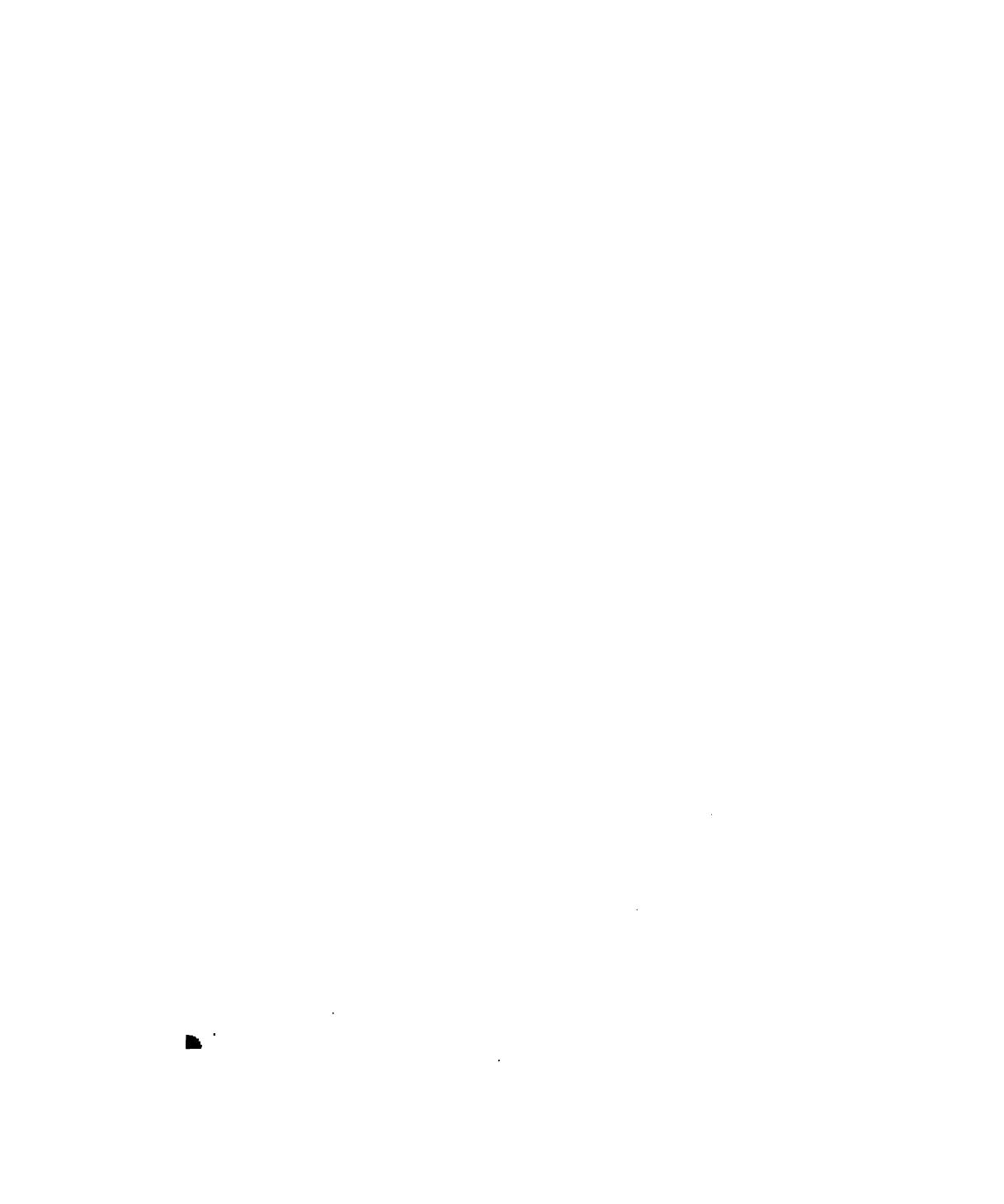
"Such were the men, thy hills who trode,
Strong in the love and fear of God,
Defying, through a long dark hour,
Alike the craft and rage of power."—JOHN STRUTHERS.

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THE COVENANTERS: THEIR HOMES, HAUNTS, AND BATTLEFIELDS.



INTRODUCTION.



HAT charming English poetess, Mary Howitt, has these pleasing and appropriate lines regarding Scotland and her heroic struggles for civil freedom and religious liberty in the olden time—

“ Land of the Bruce and Wallace,
Where patriot hearts have stood,
And for their country and their cause
Like water poured their blood :
Where wives and little children
Were faithful to the death,
And graves of martyred warriors
Are in the desert heath.”

Scotland has long been proud of her patriot sons. The names of Wallace and of Bruce still stir the heart, whether read in the pages of history, hymned in the

electric flow of song, or falling on the willing ear when uttered by the voice of tradition, in those many moving tales which still keep floating among the hills and vales of Scotland, from the wild waves of the Solway to dark and gloomy Dunnottar, and from the Bass rock to the dreary moors of Fenwick.

The patriotic and long-continued struggles of the Covenanters for those rights which their faithful contendings ultimately secured to their descendants, have rivalled, though they have neither eclipsed nor obliterated, the dauntless exploits and the ultimately triumphant efforts of Wallace, the noble-minded knight of Elderslie, or of Bruce, the hero of Bannockburn. It is not, however, as great military geniuses that the Covenanters stand out so conspicuously and so honourably in history; but for lofty courage, unselfish zeal, unmurmuring endurance, fervent piety, and unwavering faith in the Most High; and in the ultimate triumph of the principles for which they laboured, suffered, and died, they have rarely been equalled, and have never been surpassed by men of any nation or time. When their little armies had been broken and dispersed by the conquering sword of the oppressor, rather than violate their consciences by yielding, they betook themselves for shelter and security to the dreary deserts, and to "the dens and caves of the earth;" and there, for long years, amid tempest and gloom, smitten by hunger, hacked by the sword,

hunted like wild beasts of prey, and shot at like the ptarmigan of the hills, they, without a grudge—

“Laid down their lives in the moorlands away,
And bled for their God and forgiver.”

There is nothing which so much strikes the Pilgrim among the Scottish mountains, especially in the southern and western districts, as the frequency with which he so unexpectedly comes upon the Martyrs’ cairns, or the more ambitious monuments which have been raised by an admiring posterity to men whose moulderling bones have had a burial of blood in those days of darkness and death—

“When the minister’s house was the mountain and wood.”

These striking memorials of men (and of women too) “of whom the world was not worthy,” are to be met with from bleak Magus Muir in the North, to the sweet rippling bay of Wigtown in the South, and from the Greyfriars Church-yard of Edinburgh, and the green pastoral vales of Ettrick in the East, to the classic town of Ayr in the West. Among most of these wide moors where the martyrs lie, we have wandered in boyhood and in manhood. We have sat and mused beside them when the heather was red upon the hills, and when the modest blue-bells bowed their heads over the little nameless rills which came trickling down from the mountains and went tinkling and winding away through the lower glens, to join the broad rivers which gleamed far below in the

fertile valleys. We have visited these sacred spots, with their altar-stones of liberty, when the storms raved fiercely through the dark ravines; and we have come wandering upon them when the thick folds of mist enveloped the wilds, and hid every hilltop from view. We have heard the cry of the lapwing above the battle-field of Drumclog, and the wail of the plover around the grave of Richard Cameron in "the lone and wild Airsmoss." Frequently too, we have gazed upon the crystal waters of the Clyde, gliding in peaceful and pelucid beauty past the once blood-stained field of Bothwell; and we have seen the morning sunbeams glinting in among the dark defiles* which lead up to Rullion Green, and the last, lingering beams of day fading away into darkness among the rugged peaks of the Pentland Hills;—and we have heard the sea waves moan and the summer winds sigh mournfully at the grave of the virgin martyr, Margaret Wilson, whom cruel men condemned, and caused to be drowned tied to a stake within the flood-mark of the water of Blednoch, near Wigtown! On all these scenes, and on many a lonely martyr's grave besides, lying deep in the dark and frowning wilderness, we shall have something to say. We do not here intend any new history of the Covenanting times, but simply to state, briefly and lucidly, the more striking events connected with each place, and which have given to them an undying interest

in the eyes of all who have any knowledge of the history of Scotland during the twenty-eight dark and dismal years of the last persecution, when Charles II. and his brother, James VII., so unworthily filled the throne. The places made memorable during that period will be described by us, both as they appeared then, and as they look now—when the shepherd's peaceful staff, and the ploughshare of the peasant have taken the place of “the shield, and the sword, and the battle.” As every chapter will be complete in and stand entirely by itself, it will not be necessary for us to follow any chronological order in the events and places described.





CHAPTER I.

PRIESTHILL AND JOHN BROWN.

List to the tale of one who faultless fell,
Whose humble tombstone decks the moorland dell,
Far on the moor his lonely cot was placed,
A rude, unpolished gem upon the waste.
The smoke curled lonely, 'mid the air on high,
A moment hung, and melted in the sky ;
Where the brook murmured, and the mountains frowned
Through the far-stretching wilderness around,
The peaceful inmates of that humble hearth
Lived like primeval dwellers of the earth.
Summer had smiled that charmed the lingering hour,
With winds perfumed from moss and mountain flower ;
Cloud, sunshine, stream, the daisy on the sod,
Raised their unabashed hearts in praise to God.
When the unfettered tempest, high and strong,
Rocked the lone cottage as it swept along,—
Trusting in Him who guides the storm's career,
'Twas God's own music to the listening ear.—THE COVENANTERS.



HE martyrdom, or, more properly, the cold-blooded murder, of godly John Brown, "the Christian Carrier," of Priesthill, has been frequently told, and the narration has filled numberless eyes with tears, all over the English-speaking world, and the sad story will cause them still to go coursing and scalding down the cheeks of coming generations of men and women, wherever the history of our country and the story of her struggles for

religious liberty are read. Lord Macaulay has given an unfading photograph of that sad, cruel, and tragic scene in the pages of his stirring and glowing history; but the nature of that great work prevented him from giving any save the more prominent features of the dark and bloody deed, and so many particulars of much interest in the life and death of this meekest of Scotland's martyrs have been left altogether untold by the great historian.

Priesthill, the abode of John Brown, was, in his days, a small moorland farm lying far up among the wilds of Ayrshire, in the eastern part of the county, and close upon the confines of Lanarkshire, and at an elevation of about 1200 feet above the sea. It is nearly four miles north-east of the now large and prosperous village of Muirkirk, then only a small hamlet, and is surrounded on all sides, and for long distances, by dark moorlands and great, lonely, solemn-looking hills, of perpetual desolation, and incapable of cultivation. A few miles to the south of where the martyr had his home, the classic Ayr has its source; and being just on the water-shed of the country, many lesser streams, which in the dreamy days of summer go tinkling through the quiet glens, filling the air with this, the sweetest of Nature's music, have their rise amid these desert solitudes.

From the hill which overlooks the place where he then dwelt (the house itself has crumbled into dust

long years ago, and only a dry, green knoll now shows where it once had stood), a most extensive view is obtained,—from the Pentland Hills in the east, to the blue peaks of Arran's rugged isle, rising from out the gleaming waters of the Firth of Clyde, far away in the west; and from the green hills of Galloway in the south, to many a Highland “Ben,” rearing its azure summit far beyond the Forth, in the land of the Gael. All around is Martyrland, and is studded with the moss-grey stones, which record the violent and bloody end of those who “loved not their lives unto the death,” when striving for civil liberty, and for the crown-rights of Messiah. Only seven miles to the west, the lonely battle-field of Airsmoss lies full in view—

“Where Cameron’s sword and his Bible are seen
Engraved on the stone, where the heather grows green,”

and the monuments of several other martyrs of less renown.

In addition to his farming a portion of the most bleak and sterile land in all the wide county of Ayr, John Brown carried on the business of a “pack-horse carrier,” there being few roads in the country then, and none in all his locality fit for wheeled vehicles, of which, indeed, there were none save the heavy, lumbering carriages of the noblemen and gentlemen. Little is known of his earlier years, only that he was famed for his sincere piety and sound religious know-

ledge, and that many young people in the locality profited much by his instruction, counsel, and example. He was twice married, and had at least one daughter by his first wife. The name of his second partner in life was Isabel Weir, a native of the neighbouring parish of Sorn, a woman of true piety, though of a lively, cheerful temperament, and one whose woful lot will never be forgotten. Tradition has long related that the marriage was celebrated in a mountain glen, by that weird old minister—of strange prophetic renown—Alexander Peden; and that when the marriage had been performed he took the young wife aside and said to her in solemn tones, “ You have got a good husband, value him highly; keep linen for a winding-sheet beside you; for in a day when you least expect it, thy Master will take him from thy head. He follows his Lord too fully to be passed over by those who drive the chariot of persecution so furiously over the length and breadth of poor, bleeding Scotland.”

The morning after the marriage, the little daughter by Brown’s former wife slowly opened the door of the room, and putting her arm bashfully before her face, came forward a step, and then standing still, said to her step-mother, who by that time was alone, “ They say ye are my mither.” To which the young wife replied: “ What if I should be your mither?” “ Naething; but if I thocht ye were my mither, I

would like to come in aside ye for a wee," said little Janet, with winning simplicity. "I hope I will be your mither, sweet bairn," was the reply, "and that God will give me grace to be so, and that you will be a comfort to me and your father."

The persecuted wanderers often came to Priesthill in those days. John Wilson, John Smith, and another John Brown, of Blackwood, in the parish of Lesmaghanow, often met there for conversation and for prayer; but these three godly men were all shot in the spring of 1685—one of those years then, and for long after, known as "the killing time." This John Brown, of Blackwood, is often mistaken for his saintly namesake of Priesthill;—it was not Colonel Graham of Claverhouse, but a Lieutenant Murray who was his murderer, commanding him to be shot in the fields after he had received promise of quarter. For fear of such evil men he had to be buried under the cloud of night, and on the tombstone of the butchered saint these lines may still be seen—

" Murray might murder such as godly Brown,
But could not rob him of that glorious crown
He now enjoys. His credit, not his crime,
Was non-compliance with a wicked time."

About two years after John Brown's marriage, a touching incident took place at Priesthill. The husband and the father was from home, and his return was watched for with more than ordinary anxiety,

for the night was dark, and the season was winter. The storm raved hoarse and loud across the bleak waste, and its eerie howlings were heard all around, as it roared through each narrow glen that winded among the near and distant hills. But besides the darkness and the storm, the dwellers in that lonely shieling had other cause for fear. Owing to the cruel edicts of a narrow-minded and bigoted king, and of his worse and pliant counsellors, a man of John Brown's piety and nonconformity, although he had been at none of the risings of the Covenanters, could not now go abroad without taking his life in his hand. With her first babe at her breast, and singing to it a soft, low lullaby, the young wife sat by the brightly burning fire, and, with her little step-daughter, waited and watched for her husband's return. Anon a foot-step was heard at the threshold and bounding with a glad heart to meet—as she believed—her father, the little girl hastily opened the door with a wide welcome; but she hastily started back when, instead of her smiling father, a stranger stood before her in the umbered light of the turf fire.

The mother, surprised to see a stranger there at such a time, and on such a night of elemental war and fearing that he might be a spy of the persecutors hesitated for a moment to bid him welcome, and to invite him to enter. Gazing at him, she soon saw that, though but a youth, there was a pensive air of

suffering sorrow upon his face ; and this also instantly seemed to win the confidence and touch the heart of little Janet, who then took him by the hand and led him, all dripping wet, to the fire. This kindly act on the part of one so young went to the heart of the weary pilgrim, who, with a tear in his eye, and a lip quivering with emotion, exclaimed, “The blessing of him that is ready to perish be upon thy young head, dear child !” The utterance and the look at once dispelled the mother’s fears, whose welcome then became as warm and as cordial as that of the tender-hearted, and less suspicious child ; and soon John Brown himself arrived, and at once recognised in the stranger the youthful James Renwick, who, fully a year before, had begun his ministerial work among the persecuted people of Scotland, having been licensed in Holland to preach the Gospel, and who now, amid many dangers, wandered over the land, expending all his energies, and soon giving up his very life itself, for the cause which he had so warmly espoused. In pious converse and in prayer, with only a brief period of rest, the night was passed ; and ere the dawn of day, “the boy Renwick,” as his enemies called him, had to be off and away before the light could reveal him to those who were in search of him.

It is said that the now aged Peden paid a visit to Priesthill on the very night before John Brown was slain, and that he then reminded Mrs. Brown of the

warning which he had given her on the day of her marriage ; we rather think, however, that this took place a little earlier than the date which tradition has assigned to it. The time, however, had now arrived when the good man was to receive the *Martyr's Crown* ; for on the death of Charles, and the accession of his brother James to the throne, the fires of persecution were fanned into redoubled fierceness. Graham of Claverhouse, who, as the Ettrick Shepherd well and truly says, "had the nature of a wolf, if he had the bravery of a bulldog," had established a garrison at Lesmahagow, to overawe the Covenanters of Douglasdale and the west, from which he made bloody raids all over the district, and, early on the 1st of May 1685, came upon John on the hill above the house, where he had gone to cut peat, or turf, for fuel. The morning was misty, and he was surrounded before he was aware or could make any effort to escape, although Claverhouse, in the account which he afterwards sent of the bloody business to Lord-Treasurer Queensberry, says that they captured him and another after they "had pursued them a great way through the mosses." He further says that "they had no arms about them, and they denied that they had any. But being asked if they would take the *aljururation* (oath), the eldest of the two refused it." For thus refusing an oath which he could not take without being guilty of the grossest perjury, as the oath is full of falsehoods and

misrepresentations, and because, as he said, some bullets and matchpaper were found in the house, with some treasonable papers (so "the bloody Claver'se" says), "I cause shoot him dead, which he suffered very unconcernedly." This is what we are told by the executioner himself, but Graham takes care not to tell us that he had to shoot him with his own pistol, his soldiers having been so much impressed by the good man's prayers, or more likely by the painful scene before them, that, when ordered, they refused to fire upon him.

After he was taken, John Brown was brought down to his own door, and was instantly told to go to his prayers, for that he must immediately die. With the calmness of a heaven-supported Christian, he kneeled down and poured out his soul in words that appalled the soldiers, though they could not soften the iron heart of Claverhouse; but how could any utterance of the lips melt a heart which could not be touched by the agonised and tearful pleadings of the wife who stood by, with a terrified and wailing child at her side, a babe in her arms, and another about to be born! Having prayed with calmness and composure, and then kissed his weeping wife and children, he said that now the day had come that he had often spoken of, was she willing to part with him? Like a good, brave woman, she said that she was willing to do so, since it was God's will to take him from her.

This utterance of her's was a great comfort to him even in that bitter hour of death; and saying that he had long been standing prepared and ready to die, he turned his face to heaven, and implored "all promised and purchased blessings to be multiplied upon his wife and children."

Unsoftened by such a touching scene, Claverhouse then fired his own pistol at the good man's head, scattering his brains along the ground, and, turning fiercely to the horrified widow, he brutally said, "What thinkest thou of thy husband now, woman?" When, with sobbing voice, she nobly answered, "I ever thought much good of him, but more *now* than ever." "Wretch!" said Graham, "It were but just to lay thee beside him." "If you were permitted," she bravely replied, "I doubt not but your cruelty would go that far. But how will you answer for this morning's work?" "To man I can be answerable," said this monster of cruelty, "and as for God, I will take *Him* in my own hands!" Only four years after this blackest deed was done, and this blasphemous vaunt made, the summons to answer to God for this, and many similar acts, came to him suddenly in the wild Pass of Killiecrankie, just as his eye had kindled with joy, and his hopes for the future were high at the victory which he had gained over the forces of King William. Yet such was the man whom the greatest master of fiction, and a popular, though not a great

poet, have striven to portray as a model soldier, a gentleman, and a hero! He would have been so to the Turks, in Bulgaria, had he lived in our time; but Scotland has long been, and for ever will be, ashamed of his black and bloated memory.

Standing and musing lately on the spot where this sickening tragedy was enacted, we could vividly bring up before our mind's eye the dread events of that terrible morning. Far out in that solitary and trackless wild, with not a single other dwelling in sight, the poor, panting, horror-stricken, and new-made widow sets down her now fatherless infant upon the grass, spreads a napkin upon the ground beside the weltering corpse, and tenderly and carefully gathers into it the brains of her now sainted husband, whose spirit already "stands on the sea of glass" in the heavenly land, with the palm of victory in his hand, where the stream of life descends in sweetest music from the eternal hills! After she has performed this painful act of love, composed his limbs, and covered his face, she clasps her children to her agonised bosom, and sits and weeps beside the lifeless clay. Scared by the recent report of firearms in such a place, and by the now retiring cavalcade of men whose armour rang through the morning air, the hill-birds have risen from their nests, and their screaming voices are heard far along the wilderness, and in among the wild glens which open a way in among the hills;

while the report of the pistol, and the noise of the retiring troop, have petrified with fear the few dwellers in that desolate waste, who ere long learn that the spoiler has been there, and that he has spilt the guiltless blood, and stilled the heart of one of the best of Scotland's Covenanting sons.

Towards noon a neighbour matron made her appearance to condole with, and to speak comfort to, the widow in that hour of unspeakable sorrow. Soon after, this woman's husband, David Steele, a godly man, and a Covenanter also, arrived, and after the body of the murdered "Christian Carrier" had been borne into the house, he gathered the weeping mourners around him for the worship of God in the family, choosing these fine lines in the 27th Psalm as their song of consolation in that hour of deepest agony—

" For He, in His Pavilion, shall
Me hide in evil days ;
In secret of His tent me hide,
And on a rock me raise.

" And now, even at this present time,
Mine head shall lifted be,
Above all those that are my foes,
And round encompass me :
Therefore, unto His tabernacle
I'll sacrifices bring
Of joyfulness ; I'll sing, yea, I
To God will praises sing."

Lovingly and tenderly the tenants of the hill country laid him to rest beneath the turf where he

had been stretched in blood by Claverhouse, that “human bloodhound of the earth.” After the Revolution of 1688, a memorial stone was placed above his dust, with an inscription stating when, the cause for which, and the age he was when slain (58 years), some “uncouth rhymes” in the form of an acrostic having been carved upon the centre of the stone. Close to it is a modern monument, with some pretensions to beauty, to the memory of the good man, on which is this inscription :—

“This monument was erected, and the adjoining grave of John Brown enclosed, by money collected at a sermon by the Rev. John Milwaine, on August 28, 1825, in commemoration of the Martyrs.”

The first time we paid a visit to Priesthill was on an April day, a good many years ago, and which, in the words of the poet, was

“Clad in a wintry cloud.”

We had no intention of going to the spot then, but having occasion to be within a few miles of the place, we were seized with an overmastering desire to see the Martyr’s moorland sepulchre, of which we had heard and read so much, from our early youth. We approached it from the North, going up the lonely Dipple burn for nearly a mile from the Strathaven road, and then turning up the hill to the south. There was a goodly covering of snow upon the ground, and the hills were ill to walk upon, while the land-

marks by which we had been directed to go were not easily made out. We did not exactly lose our way, but we wandered out of the proper path, and in crossing a deep glen our footsteps slipped away, and, coming down upon our back, we shot down into the bottom of the ravine with the swiftness of an arrow. As however, the sides were green, though exceedingly steep, we were little the worse (though not so our clothing) for our speedy descent. On scrambling up the other side, and travelling on a good way, we could see neither house nor monument, and pausing to consider, and at the same time turning to look round (as we suppose every person does who is dubious about his way), we at once espied the place we sought, nearly half-a-mile to the west, having gone quite past it. In a few minutes we reached the lonely spot, wandered about it, and, leaning upon "the martyr's stone," we sung one of the Songs of Sion to the solemn plaintive tune of Coleshill, though well we knew that the mournful strains could not reach "the dull cold ear of death!" A scene more dreary than that which we then looked upon, it has never been our lot to see.

Some years after, we visited the place again, this time in one of the glad, green summer months; but even then it had a sad and a most lonely look, though the blue-bells were bending their heads around the martyr's grave, and the larks were singing joyously

and well, away up on the rim of a gorgeous rainbow which rested on the sides of the eastern hills.

The house where John Brown dwelt has long since disappeared, and is now known only by the nettles which have sprung up on the little mound which marks its site; and which, strangely enough, are always to be found springing up and growing on the site of every ruined house.

You can also trace the course of the garden fence, which must have been of turf—as is still common in many of the hill districts of Scotland. The little ridge can be traced all round, and the ground within has a fresher green than any to be seen without, which tells that it has once been under tillage. At the foot of this former garden is a little mossy rill, which boils, and foams, and thunders by during the floods of winter; and in the summer purls and wimples past, just as it did on that May morning 199 years ago, when the stern, cold face of John Brown's murderer was reflected in its glassy wave; and in the murmuring music which it made when we stood beside it last, it seemed to say—

“Men may come and men may go
But I go on for ever !”





CHAPTER II.

THE MARTYRS OF CROSSGELLOCH.

And 'neath that stane,—Oh, sad to tell !
Three comely youths sleep as they fell,
In bonnet broad and hadden gear,
Shot down by hands unsparing—
The shepherd of the upland drear,
Recounts, with undissembled tear,
 A deed so foul and daring.
A relic, shown with miser care,
A treasured lock of auburn hair,
Was kept by those the stane that reared,
 Struck all with breathless wonder,
When, as if yesterday interred,
Those martyrs to their gaze appeared,
 Short space the moss-turf under,
Ah, who can tell what hearts were wrung
For those lone sleepers, fair and young !
What high-wrought hopes, what breathings fond,
 In those dark days and oiden,
Were drowned in tears for him that owned,
 That ringlet soft and golden.—REV. JAMES MURRAY



THREE thousand years ago, the sweet singer of Israel, and still the most widely popular of all poets, said in one of those matchless and undying songs of his,—and which are destined yet to be sung over the length and breadth of every land, and to be heard upon the lips of the inhabitants of the most remote islands of the ocean, on to the end of time,—that “The high hills are a refuge for the

wild goats, and the rocks for the conies." In every age these strong-built battlements of nature have likewise always been resorted to as places of refuge for the oppressed and the persecuted among the tribes of mankind. Moses, in fear, fled away from the face of Pharaoh to the rocky heights of Horeb, and to the mountain solitudes of Midian. David, the future King of Israel, was frequently forced to flee to them for safety ; and on the hill of Hachilah, in the wilderness of Ziph, and in the cave of Adullam, he often sought protection from the persecuting sword of the false, jealous Saul. In the mediæval ages, the simple and uncorrupted Christians of Piedmont and the valleys of the Valais, during many long years of darkness and blood, sought for safety, and found a certain degree of shelter from the exterminating sword of bloodthirsty Rome among those sublime rocky fastnesses which frown high above the dashing and foaming waters of the Po, the Sturia, the Tanaro, and their numerous tributaries. How often, too, in our own land were the misty mountains and the rocky caves resorted to in evil times by those who "loved not their lives unto the death" in their ultimately triumphant struggles for civil and religious liberty :—

" What need we tell how Wallace fought,
Or how his foemen fell ;
Or how on glorious Bannockburn
The work went wild but well ? "

It will be a pity if our Scottish youth should ever

become unacquainted with the heroic daring of our Covenanting forefathers, those particularly of a devoted Cargill, a pious prophetic Peden, a praying and fighting Cameron, a youthful Renwick ; and of many other “Scots worthies” who, in the 17th century

“ Were dragged by men, to every pity steeled,
From rocky fastness or sequestered field,
To share with thieves their half-defrauded cell,
And there in long and painful durance dwell.
Then not enough felonious caves to fill,
Then not enough for cords and steel to kill,
But on the ankle the sharp wedge descends,
The bone, reluctant, with the iron bends ;
While dogs of death commissioned to destroy,
Rush, rend, and slay with a remorseless joy ;
The western vales unbounded murder fills,
And Scotia wails o'er all her heath-clad hills.”

How little do many in our land now, who dwell in their “ceiled houses,” with full liberty to worship their Maker in any manner they please, value their inestimable privileges, or revere, as they ought, the memories of those noble ancestors of ours who secured to us their descendants all the true liberty we now enjoy ! . We wonder if those among us who have sunk to a lifeless rationalism, and to a joyless, cheerless, scepticism, never try to find out what it was which made these men endure every privation, take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and go triumphantly and without fear to the scaffold itself. The end of life was no “leap in the dark” with them, as it is to the poor wandering followers of Hobbes, Voltaire, Hume or Mill ; or of even the intellectual giant Carlyle

gropping about in the dark, soured and dissatisfied with everything in life, and in thick gloom still even when about to cross

“ That awful gulf no mortal e'er repassed,
To tell what's doing on the farther side.”

The martyrs cf Crossgellioch were but humble men in the world's estimation, and almost all that history or tradition records of them is that when returning out of Galloway, where they had been to hear James Renwick preach, they were overtaken, or rather come upon, by a company of soldiers, and that of the four who formed the little band three were shot there in cold blood, while one, Alexander Jamieson, managed to escape. Tradition has preserved a few particulars regarding them, and tells us that, wearied with travel, and fearing to be seen during the day, they had concealed themselves among the tall heather which then overhung the dark mossbags on that lonely height, and which grew thickly and plentifully there since we can remember, although it has all left the place now. They are said to have been asleep among the heather when Colonel James Douglas and a troop of soldiers came upon them ere ever they were aware. When roused from their sleep in such terrible circumstances, Alexander Jamieson, who was young and fleet of foot, at once fled, and, though pursued and fired at, escaped and went flying down the hill with the fleetness of a roe, and crossing the marshy ground and the

Nith (which is here a considerable stream, though only a few miles from its source), near to the farmhouse of Riggfoot, he hied him away to the east, and ultimately found shelter and security in the now far-famed and always beautiful valley of the pelucid Afton, where, near to its source, it narrows into a steep and rocky defile. The other three men were shot on the spot where they were found, and soon after the Revolution a plain simple stone was placed over their remains (for they were left to be buried by the country people where they fell), and on this old stone the following inscription may still be read :—"Here lies Joseph Wilson, John Jamieson, and John Humphrey, who was shot by a party of Highlanders for their adherence to the Word of God, and the covenanted work of Reformation, 1685." This ungrammatical inscription was doubtless the composition of some unlettered peasant. In 1827 a monument of some architectural pretensions and skill was erected on the same spot, with a more elaborate and suitable inscription. The slab upon which this was cut, however, became decayed and fell out of its place a few years ago ; and when, most properly, money had been collected to have the slab replaced, the inscription was so decayed that it could not be deciphered, and those who took charge of the work of restoration were at a loss what to do ; but expressing great anxiety to have the former inscription put upon it, they applied

to the writer, who, from having often visited the spot in his solitary wanderings among the hills, remembered it perfectly and was able to supply it, and which was as follows :—

“ ERECTED

“ By the proceeds of a collection made after a sermon from Rev. vii. 14—‘These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,’—preached here by the Rev. A. M. Rogerson, of Darvel, 27th July, 1826. The congregation assembled on the occasion was numerous, respectable, and devout, and the liberal collection then made proves that the heroic struggles of our Covenanting ancestors, for civil and religious liberty, are still appreciated by the men of Kyle.

“ ‘The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.’ ”

The year in which this great gathering took place was that which has ever since been known over Scotland as “the year of the wee corn;” for as no rain fell from the time when the last oat crop was sown, until the first of it was reaped, the crop was nearly a total failure, being so short in the straw that but little of it could be cut with the sickle (then the only reaping instrument in use), so that most of it had to be pulled by the root, as flax is gathered; while the greater part of the barley crop ripened, or rather withered, without ever coming into ear! The moors, therefore, were dryer and firmer to the tread than they had ever been known to be before, and this, doubtless, caused the people to come thither in greater numbers than they otherwise would have done, on the occasion of Mr. Rogerson’s sermon.

An elder brother of the writer, who was present, thus describes the scene:—"Well do I remember the day at Crossgellioch when the Rev. Mr. Rogerson preached there many years ago, although I was then but a very little lad, and was taken there by our dear and excellent covenanting father and mother, and of sitting near to the tent from which the good man preached. The day was one of unclouded sky, and of scorching and unusual heat, even for the month of July. The congregation was a great one, and as the people sat upon the ground they extended far out in front of the tent; and I remember how, at the singing of the psalms, the precentor always paused for a little after each line had been sung, before reading the next (for the line was read before singing), as the sound, away out on the verge of the congregation, did not die away for a while after he, and those near to the tent, had ceased to sing. It was a grand, solemn and impressive scene altogether, especially to hear the deep-rolling melody go echoing far along the wild as it was being caught up by the light hill breezes, and borne aloft, and right up into the listening ear of Jehovah."

Notwithstanding the great anxiety displayed to have the same inscription on the new slab as was upon the old, we were greatly surprised, after the work was completed, to find that the principal and best part of it had been kept out, but that care had

been taken to perpetuate the knowledge of the fact that the repairs had been executed by money collected by the Free Church scholars of Old Cumnock, New Cumnock, and Ochiltree, more space being taken up with recording this not very striking fact, than in any mention made of the martyrs !

When the foundation of the monument was being dug, in 1827, a very wonderful discovery was made. The bodies of the three martyrs were come upon, lying side by side, only a little way beneath the surface, in their hosen and their plaids, fresh and undecayed, and looking as if they had only been buried yesterday, so that their very features could be plainly seen as they lay there in their mossy bed, in all the indescribable placidity of death ! The late Mr. Ivie Campbell, of Dalgig (who saw the bodies, and from whom we had the wondrous story, and who greatly revered the memory of the martyrs), on which farm the monument stands, took a mitten, or *pawkie* (as the country people call a woollen glove without fingers) from off one of the bodies, and cut from the head of another a long lock of yellow hair, and which ever after he preserved with pious care. These relics, we believe, are still in the possession of his son, Mr. Ivie Campbell, of Craigman, New Cumnock. The builder of the monument also took a portion of the soft yellow hair of this slaughtered youth, which is lovingly preserved by his excellent descendant—Miss

Margaret Reid, of Milzeoch, Old Cumnock, which place is only about a mile to the north of the martyrs' graves. The bodies had doubtless been preserved by the antiseptic properties of the black peat moss in which they lay buried; yet it seems no less surprising that, after the lapse of 142 years, they should have been come upon fresh and undecayed by the action of such a long lapse of time, and telling to the world in the most unmistakable manner the wrongs they had endured, and the deaths they had died for conscience, liberty, and truth. Crossgellioch hill, on the broad top of which these martyrs fell, and where their memorial stone now stands, is nearly four miles south, and a little way to the west of the pretty and prosperous little town of Old Cumnock. It is of considerable elevation, and commands a most extensive prospect far away, and everywhere around. To the south is seen the lofty Cairnsmuir of Carsphairn, rising in lonely grandeur amid a wilderness of lesser hills, and down to the west, the dark and rugged Star mountains, which shut in on the east that largest and loveliest of Ayrshire lakes, Loch Doon, from which the stream of the same name, now so celebrated in song, takes its rise. To the east is seen the lofty, but green and quiet mountains which mark the course of the charming Afton, the beauties of which have also been sung by Robert Burns, and which for three generations now have been ringing round the globe.

The sources of the equally classic Nith are near at hand, and its course, like a silver thread, can be distinctly traced for miles away to the east, until it enters Dumfriesshire, and passes out of sight beyond Corsancon Hill. In the same direction, but far away beyond, the lofty and dark Lowthers are to be seen, though—save when misty or gloomy thunder-clouds are resting upon their summits—“robed by distance in an azure hue.” To the north the prospect stretches unobstructed away over hill and dale, till the eye rests upon the lofty Ben Lomond, looking down upon the incomparably beautiful Loch Lomond, the queen of Scottish lakes. Near at hand, and a few miles only to the north-east, one sees, on coming to the brow of the hill, a chain of three small lakes, called the Lowes Lochs, one of which, called the Black Loch, is a marvel and a phenomenon in physical geography. It is the most westerly of the three, and is situated on the watershed of the country. This is a lake with two outlets, discharging part of its waters to the eastern and part to the western seas; so that a salmon might pass from the Frith of Clyde, up the Ayr, the Lugar and its tributaries, through the chain of lochs into the Nith, and from that into the Solway Frith, or from that again into the Frith of Clyde! Some of our best geographers have doubted if there really is such a thing as a lake with two such outlets; but Herschel, in his Physical Geography, recognises its

possibility, and mentions Lake Yojoa, in Honduras, as an instance. Humboldt, also, in his "Aspects of Nature," states that in South America—we forget where—three rivers issue from one lake and flow in contrary directions. Although in the Black Loch this is shown only on a small scale (and the loch is fast becoming smaller in size), yet the phenomenon is the same as when seen in all the vast magnitude of the great American Continent. To the west of Crossgellioch is a fine, undulating, and richly cultivated country, gradually sloping away to the coast, where, beyond the glittering and gleaming waters of the Frith of Clyde, the lofty and rugged peaks of Goatfell, in Arran's lovely isle, may be seen on a summer evening, suffused in the rich saffron, red, and orange rays which stream from the setting sun; while in the nearer distance, but far away beneath, the clumps of trees which crown the lesser heights glow in the gorgeous light of the lingering day, like the burning bush of Horeb.

Once did we linger long upon the lovely, though lonely, height where the martyrs' monument stands, on a sweet sunny afternoon, many years ago, when not a sound was heard save the bleating of a lamb, or the wailing cry of a plover, with that strange—

"That undefined, that mingled hum,
Voice of the desert never dumb,"

which all must have noticed who have wandered

much among the Moorland solitudes, or climbed the solemn-looking hills, and which did not escape that marvellous child of Nature, the Ettrick Shepherd, from whose works we quote this beautiful couplet. Lingering, musing, and at times reading, we noticed not a gathering blackness away down in the west, and ere ever we were aware, a loud peal of thunder startled us, and we saw that we were caught in one of those sudden storms which so often fall out among the mountains. The almost *eerie* silence which had so lately reigned around us was now broken by the loud rushing voice of the fast approaching tempest. Wild whirlwinds swept across the moor, and roared round the martyrs' sepulchre. Red lines of lightning ran, and played fearfully along the face of the dense, dark, troubled clouds, and the deep, dread voice of the thunder seemed to shake the mountains, and make the far-stretching wilderness to quake. The rain rushed in torrents from the darkened heavens, and, mingled with heavy hailstones, rattled on the face of the affrighted earth. We were appalled by the violence of the storm, as we cowered close to the martyrs' monument for shelter, but in less than half-an-hour it had passed away to the east, and all at once the cheering sun again shone out, and his bright and gladsome beams soon restored us to our former calmness of spirit.

Whilst turning our faces homeward and leaving

the martyrs to slumber in their lonely moorland sepulchre, till that dread morn when time shall be no more, and when—

“ Earth yielding up her secret stores,
Shall rend her bosom sod;
And all her kings shall stand uncrowned
Before the bar of God,”

we could not but think more highly than ever of the undaunted courage of these noble heroes, who endured so much for all that men value most; and we breathed an aspiration to the God of our fathers that we, and those who come after us, may still continue to be animated by the spirit of the martyrs, and that we may be enabled to hand down the same rich heritage of civil and religious liberty to coming generations; and as we did so, we took a last look at their monument ere we bent our steps down the hill, and recalled to mind these touching, true, and moving words of the Rev. Robert Simpson, “O ye who sought to obtain martial renown by slaying the people of God in multitudes, where now is your fame? Your names are a dishonour and a reproach among men, and will ere long be forgotten, or remembered only to be despised; while those whom ye vilified as the off-scouring of all things, and oppressed and killed, as pestilent and worthless men, are honoured in heaven, and virtuously esteemed on earth. Sleep on, ye bleeding bodies of the saints: sleep in your gory bed; sleep in the martyr’s wind-

ing sheet! While ye sleep, ye shall not be unattended; posterity will guard your lonely couch, and point out your dormitory to the inquiring stranger; and He in whose name ye suffered, and in whose sight the blood of His saints is dear, will at length raise you from your lowly bed to shine among the sons of light in God's own house, and in His own presence throughout a whole eternity."





CHAPTER III.

AIRSMOSS AND "CAMERON'S STONE."

A sound of conflict in the moss ! but that hath passed away,
And through a stormy noon and eve the dead unburied lay ;
But when the sun a second time his fitful splendours gave,
One slant ray rested, like a hope, on Cameron's new-made grave !

There had been watchers in the night ! strange watchers, gaunt and grim,
And wearily, with faint lean hands, they toiled a grave for him ;
But ere they laid his headless limbs unto their mangled rest,
As orphan children sat they down, and wept upon his breast !

O ! dreary, dreary, was the lot of Scotland's true ones then,
A famine-stricken remnant, wearing scarce the guise of men ;
They burrowed few and lonely 'mid the chill, dank mountain caves,
For those who once had sheltered them were in their martyr graves !

A sword had rested on the land, it did not pass away,
Long had they watched and waited, but there dawned no brighter day ;
And many had gone back from them, who owned the truth of old,
Because of much iniquity their love was waxen cold !

MRS. A. STUART MENTEATH.



MONG the many renowned heroes of the Covenant, who lived and acted during the dismal days of the long and fiery persecution which raged throughout the reigns of the royal brothers, Charles and James Stuart, none have attained to a wider or a more lasting renown than Richard Cameron, whose headless trunk was buried in "the lone and wild Airsmoss," where he fell, more than two hundred years ago. His earnest zeal, and

his fearless and withering denunciations of the open oppression and private corruptions of the times, conjoined with his piety, could not fail to make him most obnoxious to the civil power, to the prelates, and, of course, to their creatures, the ignorant and illiterate curates, who had been forced upon the Scottish people soon after the unhappy, and most disappointing, accession of Charles II. to the throne in 1660.

Richard Cameron was born under the shadow of the famous Royal Palace of Falkland, in Fife. The year of his birth is unknown, but as he was quite a young man at the time of his death, in 1680, he must have been born only a few years before Charles was restored to the throne. His father, who was a merchant, gave his son an education at the University of St. Andrews, after which he acted for a time as schoolmaster in his native town, being then an Episcopalian. Soon after, however, he became a zealous Presbyterian, when he openly joined the outed ministers of that party, and was licensed by them to preach the gospel about four years only before his death. Previous to this he had been tutor in the family of Sir Walter Scott of Harden, who, evidently, was not a very staunch supporter of the Government, seeing that in 1683 he joined in the treasonable but abortive designs of the Duke of Monmouth, for which he was apprehended, tried, and

condemned, but pardoned by the king. He was one of the first to engage in and support the Revolution of 1688. It can hardly be doubted that the baron and his tutor had talked over the high matters of State together, and that they had mutually influenced the opinions of one another. The scenery and the associations of this place, where Cameron spent these opening days of his early manhood, are thus beautifully described by Dr. Leyden in his pleasing poem, "Scenes of Infancy"—

" Where Bortha hoarse, that loads the meads with sand,
Rolls her red tide to Teviot's western strand,
Through slaty hills, whose hills are shagg'd with thorn,
Where springs in scatter'd tufts the dark green corn,
Towers wood-girt Harden far above the vale ;
And clouds of ravens o'er the turrets sail.
A hardy race, who never shrank from war,
The Scott, to rival realms a mighty bar,
Here fix'd his mountain-home ;—a wide domain,
And rich the soil, had purple heath been grain ;
But, what the niggard ground of wealth denied,
From fields more bless'd his fearless arms supplied."

We cannot stay to trace Cameron's numerous wanderings in Annandale, Nithsdale, Ayrshire, and Galloway, or his journey to and brief stay in Holland, whither he had gone to consult the numerous Presbyterian ministers, who had fled thither from the increasing fury of the persecution, in regard to some conscientious difficulties which had been troubling him. We soon after find him in Scotland again, fully resolved to hold up the blue banner of the Covenant in the face of the Prelatical party, and

to throw in his lot with the strictest of the Covenanters. Very soon he became the leader of these resolute men, and was ever at his post, wandering from place to place dispensing the ordinances of religion, and preaching by day, and often by night, in woods, in wild moorland valleys, and in the barns of remote and out-of-the-way farm houses.

Charles II., having cast everything connected with his coronation oath to the winds, Cameron and his party, finding the times growing worse, and all hope of redress gone, resolved publicly to throw off their allegiance to the despotic, perjured, and tyrannical king. Accordingly, in June 1680, accompanied by some armed men on horseback, he entered the ancient burgh town of Sanquhar, in upper Nithsdale, and, with his brother, Michael, dismounted at the cross (where a memorial stone, of which we shall speak hereafter, now marks the spot), where, after prayer and praise, he read what is popularly known as "The Sanquhar Declaration," which had been drawn up by the Rev. Messrs. Cargill, Cameron, and Douglas. In it they disowned the authority of King Charles as "having no right title to, or interest in, the Crown of Scotland, which he had forfeited by his perjury, breach of Covenant to God and His Kirk, and by his tyranny and breach of the very *leges regnandi* (the very essential conditions of government) in matters civil." After this daring and ex-

traordinary act Cameron believed that his earthly career was near its close, and in this he was not mistaken. The Government was thunderstruck at the boldness of the act, as well it might, for though the act of only a few men, and taking place in a thinly populated district, the moral effect of it upon the nation was great; whilst the throne itself felt the vibration which then went forth from the wilds of Dumfriesshire, and never did it regain its stability until the last of the cruel and tyrannical brothers was shaken from it for ever.

The Government at once offered a reward of 5000 merks for Cameron's apprehension, and the most vigorous measures were put forth to secure his capture. A few days only before his death, he preached his last sermon. This was done in Avondale, not far from the spot where the battle of Drumclog had been fought and gained by the Covenanters, only a year before. Portions of this sermon have come down to us, and from these and a few others of his discourses which have been preserved, we can see that he must have been intensely earnest, and a very son of thunder as a preacher. What truth is in the following passage!—"The man that has a good conscience has a good bed to lie on, were it in moss, moor, or mountain, in the open field, exposed to wind and weather. But for a guilty conscience,—there is no getting free from it. A man that has a good con-

science, before he sees the enemy, may be afraid, but when they come his fear vanishes. But an evil conscience is never without fears, and, O, man! if thy heart condemn thee, God can lay much more to thy charge." The following prediction, in the same sermon, seems now on the eve of fulfilment. "When it (the Standard of the true Gospel of Christ) is set up, it shall go through the nations, and *it shall go to Rome, and the gates of Rome shall be burned with fire.*"

For a week before his death he had been accompanied by a party of armed men as a guard and protection from those who were out in search of him, to take him, dead or alive,—their efforts to capture him having been redoubled since the publication of the "Sanquhar Declaration." We are affectingly told by good John Howie, of Lochgoin, that "The last night of his life was spent in the house of one William Mitchell, of Meadowhead, on the water of Ayr, where about twenty-three horse and forty foot had continued with him for a week. That morning a woman gave him water to wash his face and hands, and having washed, and dried them with a towel, he looked at his hands and laid them on his face, saying, 'This is their last washing, I have need to make them clean, for there are many to see them.' At this the woman's mother wept, but he said, 'Weep not for me but for yourself and yours, and for the sins of a

sinful land, for ye have many melancholy, sorrowful, and weary days before you.'” There were still eight of the blackest and bloodiest years of the persecution to come.

The Meadowhead here mentioned, lying fully two miles to the north of the village of Sorn, and of the water of Ayr, is nearly nine miles from the battlefield where he fell, so that when they left Meadowhead that morning, Cameron and his party must have marched eastward up the valley of the Ayr, which, from a mile above Sorn, is a dreary moorland solitude, without bush or brake, nothing but thousands of acres of black, heathery moor, and bleak benty hills, with here and there a few hidden holms lying in the loopy windings of the lonely river. When they had proceeded to within about four miles of Muirkirk, they had then crossed the stream near to the east end of Airsmoss, (not *Airdsmoss*, as it is frequently called, for it takes its name from the river, and not from a person or elevated place, as some suppose), and to have marched in a south-easterly direction. Here, on the 22nd of July, and just one month after the publication of the “Sanquhar Declaration,” when resting on the moor, they were come upon by Andrew Bruce of Earlshall, in Fife, who had been appointed to the command of “Lord Airly’s troop and Strachan’s dragoons”—Bruce having received information where Cameron was to be found

from Sir John Cochran of Ochiltree, a dangerous, deceitful person, who, while serving the Government, pretended also to side with the oppressed and persecuted Covenanters. Mr. David Hackston of Rathillet, Fifeshire, was in command of the little, toil-worn, and hunger-wasted band of Covenanters; and seeing the enemy coming rapidly upon them, and that there was no possibility of escape by flight (which latter course would have displayed no cowardice, as the royal troops, besides being far better armed, were more than double their number), Hackston rode off to seek more suitable ground on which to give battle to the enemy. This he soon found at the very eastern end of the vast morass, and here, on a firm, green knoll, surrounded on three sides by the deep, uneven, soft and treacherous moss, he drew up his little army, the horsemen being on either wing, and those on foot in the middle. Had the latter been better armed, and been able to resist the furious and repeated charges made upon them, it was the opinion even of the enemy, that Airsmoss would have proved another Drumclog, and that the Covenanters would have won the day; but, their line of battle broken, they were defeated after a most gallant defence, in which prodigies of valour were performed, particularly by Hackston, Cameron's self, and young Gray of Christoun, a youth whose piety equalled his prowess, and who, though numbered with the slain, was the one,

the enemy said, "who mauled them most." In him, Cameron's prayer before the battle—"Lord spare the green and take the ripe,"—would seem to have been answered. Nine Covenanters were killed on the spot, namely, Richard Cameron, and his brother Michael, Captain John Fowler, John Gemmell, John Hamilton, Robert Dick, Thomas Watson, Robert Paterson, and James Gray, before mentioned. Paterson was but a youth, and was also noted for his singular piety. A number of the Covenanters were wounded, one Manuel, of Shotts, dying of his wounds as he entered the Tolbooth of Edinburgh; and John Vallange died the day following. Only three others were taken prisoners. That not fewer than twenty-six of the enemy fell on the same field, while many others were wounded, shows the closeness and the fierceness of the combat.

Tradition states that, just as the battle began, a terrific storm of thunder and lightning burst over the combatants, and to this allusion is made by James Hyslop, in his noble and popular poem, "The Cameronian's Dream." Hyslop, "The Muirkirk Shepherd," from his having spent several years in that capacity near to the battlefield of Airsmoss, was well acquainted with all the traditions relative thereto, although the circumstances which caused him to compose the poem were of so strange a kind that we cannot refrain from giving them here.

A young man belonging to the district, a good scholar, well informed and clever, but who was in the habit of sneering at many of the beliefs of the peasantry, and who was altogether of a sceptical turn of mind, one night awaked his bed-fellow, telling him that he had seen a vision and that he was so terrified that he was unable to sleep. In the early part of the night, he said, he had started to visit a friend who lived to the north of Airsmoss, and in doing so had taken a circuitous route, in order to pass close to the grave of Cameron, and the other martyrs, so that he might afterwards boast of having done so at or near to "the noon of night." The evening was not only exceedingly dark, but a close mist also enveloped the moor, and so he lost his way and wandered about for a while not knowing where he was, until, ere ever he was aware, he found himself standing right over the martyrs' grave. He was then, he said, without fear, but was suddenly appalled by beholding the appearance of a chariot of fire, with drivers clothed in light! They remained in view for nearly a minute, and after moving round the grave in fully half a circle, they vanished in the misty cloud. He continued ever after this to relate it, and to believe it to be something supernatural. It has been thought that what the young man saw, or supposed he saw, may be accounted for by the red flashing glare of the Muirkirk iron furnaces gleaming

through the mist, and that a carriage at the time, though at a distance, may have been reflected on the vapoury clouds; or, it has been thought by others that the young man may have been a somnambulist, and that he had visited the grave in his sleep, and dreamed of what he thought he had actually seen. Whatever was the cause, or whatever it really was which he saw, it cured him of his scepticism, and he is reported to have been ever afterwards an humbler and a better man. It was on this incident that Hyslop founded his poem, which he relates as a dream. We give the concluding stanzas, describing the defeat of the Covenanters:—

“ The muskets were flashing ! the blue swords were gleaming !
The helmets were cleft ! and the red blood was streaming !
The heavens were black, and the thunder was rolling,
As in Wellwood’s dark valley the mighty were falling.

“ When the mighty had fallen, and the combat was ended,
A chariot of fire through the dark cloud descended ;
Its drivers were angels on horses of whiteness,
And its burning wheels turned upon axles of brightness.

“ A seraph unfolded its doors bright and shining,
All dazzling like gold of the seventh refining ;
And the souls who came forth out of great tribulation,
Have mounted the chariot and steeds of salvation.

“ On the arch of the rainbow the chariot is gliding,
Through the path of the thunder the horsemen are riding ;
Glide swiftly, ye spirits ! the prize is before ye—
A crown never fading—a kingdom of glory ! ”

Airsmoss is an extensive and dreary swamp, stretching through the parishes of Sorn, Auchinleck, and away up into that of Muirkirk. The “gurgling Ayr,”

which rises a little to the east of the lofty Cairntabl runs along the whole of its northern margin, an it is only when it passes to the west of it, and near the secluded village of Sorn, and the policies of Sor Castle, and flows past and underneath "The bonr woods of Ballochmyle," that the stream becomes at a beautiful; but from Sorn, until it joins the salt se wave at the ancient and classic county town of Ay there are few more picturesque streams to be met with anywhere. The place where Cameron and his compatriots so bravely fought and fell, is a sweet green knoll on the farm of Lower Wellwood, and save on the east, it is surrounded on all sides by dark and a dismal moor, full of deep mossbags, and almost impassable, even on foot, in the driest summer weather. It was here the heroes fell, and on this green spot they were buried, and here now the monument stands in their honour, a sacred spot of pilgrimage, for the lovers of freedom and of right from many a distant land. Well do we remember the time when we first visited the spot. The writer was then a very little lad, and he was taken there by his reverend and covenanting parents, fully fifty years ago. The present monument had not then been erected, but a flat, or what the country people call *thruagh stane*, covered the ashes of the patriot martyr. It has carved upon it (for the old stone has been preserved) the representation of an open Bible, an

a hand holding a naked sword, and below the names of those who fell are the following lines—

" Halt, curious passenger, come here and read,
Our souls triumph with Christ our glorious Head ;
In self-defence we murdered here do lie,
To witness 'gainst this nation's perjury."

The occasion of our first visit was a sermon preached there by the late Rev. Dr. William Symington, of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Glasgow, but then of Stranraer. It was the lovely summer-time, and, though a week-day, the congregation was composed of several thousands from all the country round. Though then but very young, well do we remember him beginning the services of the day, by reading the first sixteen lines of the metrical version of the 74th Psalm, and of his prefacing the singing of these mournful and entreating lines regarding the desolations of Sion by some eloquent and thrilling remarks, and of the awe and surprise which we felt when the vast multitude joined in singing these pathetic verses to the plaintive tune of Martyrdom, and when the breeze-borne notes were wafted far over the bleak moorlands, startling the wild birds of the wilderness, and the shepherds watching their flocks, away beyond the neighbouring hill-tops. From the large collection made that day, a handsome and durable monument was erected to the brave men who take their last long sleep there in the dreary moor.

where their blood was so wantonly and so wickedly shed when standing for liberty, and right, and

“ Because they dared alone be free
Amidst a nation’s slavery.

Frequently since have we visited this “high place of the field” where these good and noble men “jeopardized their lives.” We drove past, or rather within sight of it a few years ago, on a lovely summer morning, just as the sun began to show his golden rim over the tall crest of the lone Cairn-table Hill. Save a few sheep nibbling close by, and the larks already aloft and singing in the sky, no other living thing was near or at all within our sight, and sound there was none save that music from the air, and the unceasing rush of the distant river, now high now low, as the balmy morning wind bore it onward and away, and which has never ceased to be heard around that hallowed sepulchre since it was drowned by the wild uproar of the battle two hundred years ago!

We visited it again, when, by appointment, a week-day meeting was held there, and when addresses were delivered by the late Rev. James Murray of Cumnock, the Rev. Alexander Macdonald of the same place, and the Rev. Peter Mearns of Coldstream. The gathering on this occasion was but small, for, though in the month of August, the morning and forenoon were wet and wild, and ere the hour of meeting came, the roar-

ing wind, accompanied by drenching rain, came wildly over the waste, and from the adjacent hills the misty folds came brooding down with drearest aspect upon the desolate moor. If a lull in the tempest at any time took place, the mournful desolation of the scene was only made more complete by seeing, through some rift in the storm-cloud, the long fringes of the misty clouds drooping and sailing along the dreary hills. It was worth while, however, thus to brave and to bear the tempest, come far through the plashy moor, and even stand out in the pelting and pitiless rain, to hear the animated addresses which were delivered by the three gentlemen we have named.

On a later occasion we were present when commemorative services were held there on the two-hundredth anniversary of the battle. The services were ably conducted by the Rev. Mr. Dick of Wishaw, a faithful follower of the martyrs, and a most able contender for the principles for which they laid down their lives. As we hied homeward from these most interesting services, in which he spoke so hopefully of the ultimate triumph of the principles for which our forefathers so nobly stood and so dauntlessly died, we remembered these lines in a noble poem, written during "Disruption times" by an American lady, Mrs. J. L. Gray, who sympathised with the struggle, and we thought the sentiments they express most applicable to the times still :—

" Two hundred years, two hundred years, our barque o'er
billowy seas,
Has onward kept her steady course, through hurricane and
breeze ;
Her captain was the Mighty One who quelled the flood below,
And still He guides who guided her, two hundred years ago,"

and we were more than ever convinced that the influence of the martyrs of the Covenant had long been felt, not only in Scotland, but in England and Ireland, and even beyond the Atlantic wave; and that never would it cease to be felt, but would fan the flame of patriotism and religious freedom till latest time.

Thus we thought and mused as we left the hallowed spot on that sweet and peaceful Sabbath evening, when the people were dispersing in every direction all over the moor. The soft and temperate rays of the now westerling sun were streaming far across the purple waste, as we cast a parting look at the tall obelisk which now adorns the martyrs' mossy bed; and we recalled to mind these truthful words of the late Professor John Wilson, in reference to the struggles of the Covenanters, "But for the single-hearted sufferings of these virtuous men—but for their resistance to tyranny—the proudest genius amongst us, perhaps even now, might have been *clanking a chain, or adoring a wafer.*"

Yes, verily; and therefore the fervent resolution of all of us, as regards our much-loved country, ought to be that of the poet—

"The hero's palm, the martyr's crown,
The patriot's deathless name,
From age to age shall hand thee down
First in the ranks of fame.
My fathers loved thy rugged strand,
They sleep beneath thy sod;
And mine shall be my father's land,
And mine my father's God."





CHAPTER IV.

ALEXANDER PEDEN.

" Their prophet-mantles rolled in blood,
By tribulation riven,
From Scotland's ark drove back the flood,
' That chased them up to heaven.'
Where Peden bold, in flood and fold,
On mountain, moor, or glen,
All seer-like, bore salvation's cup
To fainting martyr men.
" When Heaven's brooding wing of love,
Like Israel's pillar-cloud,
Them lapped in Nature's misty tent,
A prayer-woven shroud.
Their home was oft the mountain cave,
Their couch the waving fern,
Their pillow oft the grey moss stone,
In moorlands dark and stern." —MARION PAUL AIRD.



F all the Covenanters who figure in the history of the last persecution, which, with increasing bitterness, extended over the long period of twenty-eight years, from 1660 to 1688, no one had a more remarkable career, or is better or more lovingly remembered in death, than Alexander Peden, or "Peden the prophet," as, with a feeling of awe, he is still designated by the peasantry of Scotland. Strange, and indeed very wonderful, things have been told of this remarkable man of God, in regard to the spirit



of prophecy which he was supposed to possess; and while many well-authenticated circumstances are related which seem to confirm the belief, once so widely held, that he had the power to foretell future events, this very belief, and this very power—or that which looks so like it—have led to the invention of numerous stories, and even to the publication of a little book called “Peden’s Prophecies,” which is well known to be spurious in its main contents at least. Its author, Patrick Walker, a pedlar, lived during and for long after the times of Peden, and was evidently a person of great credulity and little judgment, though highly venerating the memories of those who contended and suffered for the Covenant. At the same time, all the attempts recently made by the half-hearted advocates of the Covenanters and their struggles, to explain away everything which such men as Peden and Cameron plainly appear to have predicted, and which most certainly came to pass, have most assuredly been failures. To say that they possessed only a greater amount of natural sagacity than other men, and were thus able to foresee the certain results of the actions of the rulers and others of the time, is not a satisfactory way of accounting for some predictions which they evidently did utter; for really they were not, in general, more sagacious than other people of like position, but sometimes even less so. When, however, they were driven out from

the dwellings of men to make their abodes in the lonely deserts, and in the dens and caves of the earth, and when their days and nights were passed in wrestling with God in prayer, in watching for their lives, in fleeing from their enemies, and in bewailing the desolations of their beloved Sion, does it seem wonderful that the Holy Spirit endowed their mental vision with power to pierce the future, so that they might be kept from altogether sinking under the sea of troubles which, in these evil times, came surging in upon them ? In a better and a holier sense than that which the poet implies, it may perhaps be said that—

“The desert gave them visions wild,”

and when they rose from their knees in their long wrestling with God, for themselves and for His afflicted Church, they had something more than a mere “comfortable persuasion” given them of Sion’s deliverance, and of the ruin of their enemies. S. T. Coleridge, one of the greatest thinkers of our age, thus speaks of the power of prophecy :—“It is impossible to say whether an inner sense does not really exist in the mind, seldom developed, indeed, *but which may have a power of presentiment.* All external senses have their correspondents in the mind ; the eye can see an object before it is distinctly apprehended, —why may there not be a corresponding power in the soul ? The power of prophecy might have been

merely a spiritual excitation of this dormant faculty. Hence you will observe that the Hebrew seers sometimes seemed to require music." Good old John Howie, of Lochgoine, is most sensible in this matter when he thus speaks,—“Although these things are now made to stoop or yield to the force of ridicule, the sarcasms of the profane, and the fashions of an atheistical age and generation, yet we must believe and conclude with the Spirit of God, that the secrets of the Lord both have been, are, and will be with them that fear Him.”

Alexander Peden was born at Auchincloich, in the northern part of the parish of Sorn, in the year 1626. Auchincloich is an old Celtic name, and signifies *the field of stones*. Although the name is doubtless much more ancient, yet it is somewhat remarkable that, fully ninety years ago, a small field near to the house was then thickly covered over with flat, broad stones, on most of which strange figures were carved, and characters like rough, illegible inscriptions — memorials, doubtless, of the dead, and records, perhaps, of some long-forgotten battle. From, and after the year 1789, the writer's mother passed five years of her girlhood there, and used, in the warm summer days, to rub these strange old stones over with dry, sandy turf, and thus clear them of the lichen, or moss-fog, and then trace, with childish wonderment, the unknown and mysterious characters with which they

were covered over. It is unfortunate that they were soon after taken up, broken, and built into the wall of the new houses which were then being erected by or for the then farmer, whose name was William Richmond, and who, it is evident, possessed none of the antiquarian likings and tastes of the Jonathan Oldbuck of Scott's celebrated novel, "The Antiquary," for when the old houses were taken down, some swords were found hidden away in a hitherto unknown recess in the wall, of which so little care was taken, that they were soon after lost, or taken away. But we must not turn archæologist, and forget Peden in these memorials of, perhaps, a far more distant age.

Although it is not stated where, yet Peden received a regular training at some university—most likely that of Glasgow. After this he acted as schoolmaster, session-clerk, and precentor at Tarbolton, some nine miles to the west of his birthplace. Wodrow states that for a time he was employed in the same capacities at Fenwick, but this is doubtful. While at Tarbolton, he was, as by miracle, freed from a vile scandal which had been laid to his charge, as is strikingly related, by Sergeant Nisbet, in a manuscript volume which he left behind him, he being personally acquainted with Peden. Nisbet, we may say, was fully persuaded that Peden possessed the gift of prophecy, for he says: "He often foretold many things which were to befall particular persons and families;

and he often foretold many things antecedent thereunto, the most of which I have lived to see fulfilled."

Having received license to preach the Gospel, he, when fully thirty years of age, was settled minister of New Luce, in Galloway, a parish which, some twelve years before, had been separated from the ancient parish of Glenluce. Here he continued for only three years, having been ejected from his charge—with the great majority of the other ministers of Scotland—in 1663. The solemn arrest which he put upon the pulpit—striking it with the Bible, that none but a Presbyterian minister should enter it—is well known, and was strikingly fulfilled. We know little of Peden's manner of life while sojourning in the lovely though lonely valley of the Luce; though there can hardly be a doubt but that the solemn, silent hills which stood like sentinels around him day and night, with the waters of the Luce for ever rushing by on their way to the never silent, ever sounding sea, glittering and gleaming away down in the west, had a strange effect upon his peculiar mental organisation, and helped to give to the man that weirdness of character, and surround him with that strange awe, which all seemed to feel in his presence.

His last sermon in his little church must not only have been wonderfully impressive and overpowering in its rugged eloquence, but also of the most deeply solemn character; for he continued among his weep-

ing people until the shadows of the night were darkening the valley ; and when at last the parting must take place, he closed the door behind him as he left the pulpit, and then, taking the Bible, he gave three hard knocks upon it therewith, saying solemnly : — “ In my Master’s name I arrest thee ! that none ever enter thee, but such as enter as I have done, by the door ; ” and during the whole twenty-five years of the persecution which were yet to come, no curate, or any of the “ indulged ” ministers ever did enter it, nor any one, indeed, until the glorious Revolution had dawned upon the country. Though ejected from his church, Peden, it is supposed, paid several visits to his people there, and two of his discourses have been preserved, which he preached to them in 1682. Long previous to this, however, the Government had taken action against him, and having been summoned before the Council in Edinburgh, and not appearing, he was declared a rebel, and his life and his fortune forfeited. He then joined those who took up arms, and were ultimately defeated at the disastrous battle at Pentland hills, though he himself had previously left them in the vicinity of Lanark, as, from their disheartened and disorganised state, it was not difficult to foresee that their defeat was all but certain, whenever they met the enemy.

From that time till 1673, he wandered up and down the country, principally among the wilds of Ayrshire,

Dumfries, and Galloway, making also occasional visits to Ireland. Many and marvellous were the escapes which he had from the dragoons, which scourged the country in quest of him and the others who refused to comply with the prelatic party. In that year, however, he was taken prisoner, and, without a trial, was sent to the lonely fortress on the Bass Rock, where he remained for five long, dreary years. He was then brought to trial, and, with sixty others, sentenced to perpetual banishment in Virginia; but, as Peden is said to have predicted, through some instrumentality not very well-known, they were all set at liberty on their arrival at Gravesend. Going then to London, where he stayed for some months, he again returned to Scotland, on the very day that the Covenanters were being so signally defeated and broken up at Bothwell Bridge. We cannot wait to recount his many remaining wanderings, and hair-breadth escapes from his pursuers. The mists which brood so frequently over the lonely Glendyne, and the broad moors of Sanquhar, oft hid him in the most marvellous manner, from those who thirsted for his blood. The wild wastes of Avondale, the desolate Airsmoss, and the lonely and rugged hills around Muirkirk, were his frequent hiding places, and it was in the latter locality, at Priesthill, that, only four years before his death, he married "the Christian carrier," John Brown, to the equally pious Isabel Weir. A little before this time

hungry and weary, and with a sinking heart, he had come wandering to the recently made grave of the pious and intensely earnest Cameron, where so lately had been heard the shout and the clang of the keenest battle the Covenanters ever fought, and where that hero's mutilated body now filled a bloody grave. Sitting there and weeping bitter tears, the worn-out wanderer uttered the doleful wail, "O to be wi' Ritchie!" Soon, however, a light from heaven—the promised Comforter—caine to sooth his agony of soul, and inspire him with fresh courage; and there in the wilderness, and just as the daylight faded, and, as we have it in the fine lines of that true and spirit-stirring poetess, Mrs. Stuart Menteath,—

" Upon the lone and wild Airsmoss
Down sunk the twilight grey,
In storm and cloud the evening closed
Upon that cheerless day.
But Peden went his way refreshed
For peace and hope were given;
And Cameron's grave had proved to him
The very gate of heaven."

The last of this good man's hiding-places was a concealed cave on the brink of the now classic Lugar, a little way above its junction with the river Ayr, and not on the Ayr itself, as has often been said, and not near to the garrison at Sorn Castle, as we have always been told, but four miles, at least, away to the southwest. Rising on the confines of Lanarkshire, the Lugar for a good many miles winds its way through

the most dreary and naked wilds which are to be met with anywhere, but from a little way above its junction with the Bello Water (from which place only it takes the name of Lugar, being called the Glenmuir until it reaches this spot), its course is one of great beauty, as it winds past Logan House, Lugar village (the most beautiful mining village in Scotland), the thriving and picturesque town of Old Cumnock, through the naturally beautiful, and extensive policies of Dumfries House—the seat of the Marquis of Bute,—on past Ochiltree and Ochiltree House (where John Knox got his wife, and of which we will speak again), and the Place of Auchinleck, the seat of the Boswells. Here the banks become steep and rocky, though also richly wooded. Here the Lugar is joined by the Dipple burn, and the scenery at this part is both sublime and beautiful in the highest degree, with the ruins of the former seat of the family, frowning high upon a dizzy steep overlooking both streams. It is a little below this place where Peden's cave is still to be seen. It is small, much smaller than some others which are to be found a little further up the stream. The entrance to it is difficult, being very narrow, and most likely the ever-living waters have worn away the rock, and made it more difficult of entrance since Peden's day.

It was not to Auchincloich, the place of his birth, as most writers have supposed, but to a place called

Ten-Shilling-Side, a farm rented by his brother, on the Auchinleck estate, or rather to the cave which is only at a small distance from it, that Peden returned to die. The security of the cave was not at all in its being inaccessible, but in its not being known; and Peden, when in the district, had for years made use of it as a place of shelter from his foes. Often have we visited the spot, and elsewhere we have thus described it, and Peden's life there, and how in our visits to it, we and a brother, who has the same high reverence for the memory of the Covenanters,

“Afar down in sweet Lugar’s lovely glen,
Made Israel’s psalms roll on the breeze again,
Or ring within the Covenanter’s cave
(Whose time-worn steps the living waters lave),
And thought of Peden, and his weary life,
True to his God ’mid scoffers, blood, and strife ;
Who, when day dawn’d, came here with weary feet
Unmurmuringly, and sought this lone retreat ;
Chanting those strains which Judah’s king of old
Harp’d to his God in Engedi’s stronghold,—
‘Thou art my dwelling-place, and thou shalt me
From trouble keep, from danger set me free.’
Wrestling with God he passed the hours away,
While his rapt eye pierced the far future day ;
Then, when on earth the darkness settled down,
Or thunderclouds closed in with awful frown,
Grasping his staff, when storm blasts whistled shrill,
And nimble lightnings played around the hill,
Would hie him far to some lone desert place
Known only to the persecuted race :
And there with winning words would point the way
To peace and rest, beyond life’s troubled day ;
Yet show how wicked men, and foes of God,
To ruin rush’d by many an evil road.”*

* The *Christian Year*, p. 58.

Peden, however, did not die in the cave, for somehow learning that it had become known to the enemy, he left it, and came early one morning to his brother's house, which much distressed and perplexed the inmates there, for they knew that the soldiers were on the search for him; and come they did soon after, but though they searched, they missed the place of his concealment, and as he had foretold, before other forty-eight hours, he was beyond their reach, having entered upon his eternal rest, and gone

“Where tyrants vex not and the weary rest.”

Mr. John Ker, of Kersland, in his memoirs, speaking of Peden (whose contemporary he was), says:—
“When he was sick unto death, in the year 1686, he told his friends that he should die in a few days; but having, he said, foretold many things, which will require some time before they be verified, I will give you a sign which will confirm your expectation that they will as surely come to pass as those you have already seen accomplished before your eyes. I will be decently buried by you, but if my body be suffered to rest in the grave where you shall lay it, then I have been a deceiver, and the Lord hath not spoken by me; whereas if the enemy come a little afterward to take it up, and carry it away and bury it in an ignominious place, then I hope that you will believe that the Lord Almighty hath spoken by me, and consequently there shall not a word fall to the ground.”

Nothing is more certain than that, six weeks after Peden had been interred in Auchinleck churchyard, a troop of dragoons came, and, with unspeakable brutality, violated the sanctity of his grave. His coffin was taken up and broken open, the shroud was ruthlessly torn from off his wasted and decaying body, and hung over an upright gravestone, when, as if offended at the monstrous deed, the winds of heaven (although previously there had hardly been a breath blowing) took it up and bore it away until it was caught upon the branches of an adjacent tree. That tree stood till only a few years ago, and was pointed to by the peasants of Auchinleck with awe in their looks, to the curious stranger, for a tradition, going back for at least four generations, tells us that from that day forth, until the tree fell a few winters ago, the branch on which the shroud was caught withered, and no green leaf ever graced it again! But, though blasted, it did not decay! and there most surely the leafless limb, withered, and shrunk, and dry, remained the same through many years, as we have seen for ourselves, and as aged men have told us it had also done during all the years they had lived. The tree, in all likelihood, would have been standing still, but in the making of some walks through the cemetery its roots were injured, and after a year or two it died, falling during one of the great storms of winter.

All writers, from John Howie downwards, state that Peden was buried in the laird of Auchinleck's aisle ; but, notwithstanding this, we believe that such was not the case, and indeed it is a very unlikely circumstance that he should have been so,—that vault, hewn out of the rock, and far beneath the ground, having from time immemorial been scrupulously reserved for those belonging to the family. All round in this place of sepulture there are niches cut into the red freestone, each large enough to contain a single coffin. Here old Lord Auchinleck was buried in 1782. It was he who built the present fine house (or Place, as it is generally called) of Auchinleck, and with his reflecting taste and love for learning, caused to be inscribed upon its front this sentence from one of the Latin poets—

“*Quod petis hic est,
Est Ulubris animus si te non deficit equus;*”

translated thus—

“ True happiness is to no state confined,
But still is found in a contented mind.”

In this family vault, too, only thirteen years later, James Boswell, the renowned biographer of Dr. Johnson, was laid down to take his last long sleep among his kindred. We have, however, other and better reasons for believing that though Peden was buried in Auchinleck Churchyard he was not laid in the burying-place of the Boswells. A very aged and most

respectable man of the name of Hodge, whom we perfectly well remember, stated positively that he had heard his aged grandfather of the same name say that he had witnessed the lifting of Peden's body, and had done so when a little boy standing among a group of the horror-stricken inhabitants of the village. His grave, he said, was near to, but not in the Auchinleck vault at all. Regarding this matter he was quite positive, and he also saw the winding-sheet hung over the gravestone, and afterwards wafted away by the wind. The terrible fright which he got at the atrocious deed which he then witnessed imprinted it on his memory forever after; and from the way we have heard this version of the affair related to us, as well as from the character of those who transmitted it to us, we have no doubt at all but that this is the correct account of the strange and horrible event. The reason why, and the purpose for which Peden's body was disinterred was, that, as they had not been able to take him alive and put him to death, they might at least hang him in chains on the gallows, at the place of public execution at Old Cumnock; and for this purpose, and with this intention, the soldiers bore his body thither. But this ignominious act was prevented through the spirited and firm intervention of William second Earl of Dumfries, a privy-councillor, who was then residing at Leifnorris (the former name of Dumfries House), two miles west

of Cumnock. Going to Murray, the commander of the party, he told him that "the gibbet was erected for malefactors and murderers, but not for such men as Peden," and in consequence of this, they reinterred him, though there, at the gallows foot. Only a year before, three other Covenanters had been hanged upon that same gibbet, and buried at its foot. Their names are David Dunn, Simon Paterson, and Thomas Richards,—the latter an old man of eighty years, and who, because he had confessed that he had entertained some of the homeless Covenanters, and notwithstanding the entreaty of some ladies of the Episcopal persuasion, was thus wantonly and cruelly put to death, without any trial, by command of Colonel Douglas. The Rev. James Murray, in "Songs of the Covenant Times," thus writes of these sad events—

" They thrust him in a hasty grave,
 Wrapped in his shepherd's plaid ;
Where sainted Simon Paterson
 And David Dunn were laid.

" O, guileless Thomas Richards,
 It had joyed thee hadst thou known,
That godly Peden's dust, ere long,
 Had mingled with thine own !

" O, brave leal-hearted martyrs,
 When near your graves I stand,
And see you in your age of storm,
 A fearless, faithful band—

" Methinks I hear your honest voice,
 In the quaint old tombstone rhymes
Exhorting us—O, lesson meet !
 To prize our peaceful times."

After the Revolution, and when these iron-hearted oppressors, the Stuarts, had ceased to rule, the gallows was removed, and the people began to lay their dead near to and around the grave of Peden; and more than a century ago the former churchyard, which is now the busy and beautiful Square of the town, became entirely disused, and from that day till now the dead of generations have been laid to rest there, beside the grave of the grand and weird old Covenanter. It is a quiet and picturesque spot, and the view obtained from it is extensive and lovely. Standing there on a still, clear summer eve, the eye can wander from the far-off hills of Galloway, down to the richly cultivated coast-land, which stretches far along the shore of the Firth of Clyde, away down in the west. The well-wooded valley of the Lugar lies dreamily in view, and the murmuring music of its waters—which no lapse of years can hush—comes wafted up the vale, sweetly and softly, upon the western breeze. The pretty and prosperous town of Cumnock looks fair and beautiful, down in its “sleepy hollow” at the confluence of the Lugar and the Glaisnock waters. A simple stone with a modest inscription marks the grave of this devoted and devout man, of “whom the world was not worthy.” Two knarled and aged hawthorns entwine their branches and keep guard over his grave, and in springtime and summer, distil their dewy tears upon the lowly and humble

tomb in which he and the three martyrs of the Covenant now take that last, long slumber, from which there shall be no awaking till that dread morn when the piercing peal of the archangel's trump shall strike with terror the astonished world ! and when

“Earth, yielding up her secret stores,
Shall rend her bosom sod ;
And all her kings shall stand uncrowned
Before the bar of God !”





CHAPTER V.

THE MAUCHLINE AND SORN MARTYRS.

If on the plains where Wallace fought the patriot's bosom swell,
And the bold Switzer drops a tear upon the grave of Tell,
Shall Scotland with irreverent eye, behold the wild flowers wave
Above the mound, once stained with blood, her Covenant heroes' grave?

They sleep where, in a darker day, by dreary moos and fen,
Their blood bedewed the wild heath-flower in many a Scottish glen;
When forced to flee their humble homes, for Scotland's Covenant Lord,
They grasped to save their holiest rights, the Bible and the sword.

GEORGE PAULIN.



HE best reply to the unpatriotic apologists of the bloody persecutors, who so frequently and wantonly shed the blood of our forefathers in Scotland's covenanting times, is to point them to those many cruel murders which, during so many years "of darkness and blood," were perpetrated in all parts of the country, often without so much as even the semblance of trial, and many times too by common soldiers, as in the case of George Wood, a youth sixteen years of age, belonging to the parish of Sorn, who was shot dead by a monster of cruelty called John Reid, a common trooper, who, when chal-

lenged for the bloody act, excused himself by saying that he knew him to be a Whig, and that these ought to be shot wherever they might be found! Such power, however, had been conferred on such as he, by the Act passed against Conventicles in 1685.

Of this youth hardly anything is now known save what is recorded upon the two memorial stones which have been erected to the memory of the murdered lad, and which are still to be seen in the churchyard of the parish. The original stone was built into the wall of the church when the modern monument was erected. On the first there is this inscription :—

“Here lies George Wood, who was shot at Finkhornhill, by bloody John Reid, trooper, for his adherence to the Word of God, and the Covenanted Work of Reformation, 1688.”

On the modern monument, which stands quite close to the old one, this inscription may be read :—

“To preserve from oblivion the fate of George Wood, who was shot at Finkhornhill, 1688, for his adherence to the Word of God, and the Covenanted Work of Reformation, and to manifest gratitude for the invaluable religious privileges now enjoyed, this stone was erected by subscription.”

Finkhornhill was at one time a small farm, but the houses have long been in ruins, though portions of the grey walls are still to be seen. The farm is now included in that of West Town, but the hill of the same name is on Blackside farm, and is a little to the south-east of the loftier Blacksidend, and has an elevation of fully 1000 feet above the sea. The place

commands a most extensive and varied prospect, beautiful towards the west, picturesque and far-reaching to the south, but of dreariest desolation to the east; while on the north it is hemmed in by higher ground, and dark and deep mossbags. The place where this cruel, bloody deed was done is about two miles north-east of Sorn village.

The erection of the modern stone is but of recent date, and the good work was brought about through the exertion and liberal aid of a most worthy lady of the district, the late Miss Rankin, of Glenlogan, an ancient and highly respected Ayrshire family. Many years ago, the late Mr. William Rankin, this excellent lady's brother, pointed out to us a grand and hoary old oak, a little way to the east of Glenlogan House, underneath which, it was always said, the renowned John Knox preached in one of his journeys to the west.

The situation of the church and churchyard of Sorn is exceedingly beautiful, and is far away from the busy world. The river Ayr, which is here a very considerable stream, sweeps singing by, the soothing murmur or the wild rush of its waters being heard at all times in this quietest resting place of the dead. Forty years ago, the parish school stood close beside the churchyard, and the windows looked into this place of graves. Now, however, the school has been removed up to the village, which stands about a

quarter of a mile to the east; and, though but a hamlet, it is one of the most picturesquely situated of any in all the county of Ayr, or even in the whole west of Scotland. Well-wooded banks rise on either side of it to the north and south, with pretty holms between, through which the Ayr flows past the village, which stands on its northern bank. At a graceful bend in the noble river, and high upon a dizzy steep, stands Sorn Castle, an imposing building, about three hundred yards to the north-west of the church. Nearly five centuries ago it was the property of one of the Hamiltons of Cadzow, ancestors of the Duke of Hamilton. In the time of Charles II. it was taken possession of by the Government, and turned into a fortalice, and a garrison was placed there for the purpose of overawing the Covenanters of the district. A century ago it was the residence of the Dowager-countess of Loudoun, who had a retinue of servants, nearly all as aged as herself, and lived till she was within a few months of one hundred years of age. Sorn, as we have already stated, was the birthplace of the saintly Alexander Peden, and Auchincloich, where the "prophet" of the Covenant first saw the light, is about four miles to the north of the village. It was then, and for long after, a bleak cold spot, but now, from planting and improved tillage, the modern farmstead has quite an inviting appearance.

From Sorn to the busy, thriving little town of Mauchline, is only a distance of three miles. This is not only a larger and more famous, but it is also a far more ancient village than Sorn. Its name is of Gaelic origin, and signifies "place of water-springs," and before the dawn of civilization the Celts selected this as a settlement, in consequence of its fine situation and its copious and excellent springs of water. So long ago as the year 681, and again in 702, we find the people of Strathclyde resisting the invasions of the Irish Scots, and defeating them at the battle of Mauchline, so that this little town (now so famous in the history of literature), can claim an antiquity of at least twelve hundred years. It was in the year 1156, however, that it came more prominently into view, when, on grants of land being given them by the Crown, the monks of Melrose sent a prior and some subordinates to Mauchline, where, at the period named, they erected the castle or priory, the ruins of which still stand in the midst of the village, in an excellent state of repair.

After the Reformation, the famous George Wishart came west by invitation, and it was proposed that he should preach in the church, but a party resisted his entrance; and when Hew Campbell, of Kinzean-cleuch, and others had determined by force to enter, Wishart, like a peaceful man of God, would not permit him, saying, "Brother, Christ Jesus is as potent in the

fields as in the kirk ;” so they withdrew to what was then an open moor on the south-west of the town, where he preached, with wonderful power, to a large multitude of people for nearly three hours ; and so stirring was his eloquence, and so powerfully did the Holy Spirit work by it, that one of the most notoriously wicked men in all the west country, Lawrence Ranken, laird of Shiel, in the parish of Sorn, was struck with terror, cried like a child, and gave evidence of true conversion by leading a good life from that day.

A few years later, sturdy, brave John Knox, preached at Kinzeancleuch, not far from the same place, and the spot where he did so was pointed out to us, a good many years ago, by Major General Alexander, the popular and excellent Member of Parliament for South Ayrshire, who was then residing at Kinzeancleuch (to whom it now belongs), during the time that repairs were being made upon his beautiful, and far more famous mansion of Ballochmyle.

In 1647, when faction ran high in Scotland, Major-General Middleton came upon a handful of Covenanters who had met on Mauchline Moor for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, and who had continued their meeting for several days hearing the ministers who took part in the services—William Guthrie, of Fenwick, John Nevay, of Loudoun, and William Adair, of Ayr. The reason why Middleton

—who had with him the Earl of Callander—attacked the Covenanters here, was because they refused to join the Duke of Hamilton in making war upon England. The Earl of Loudoun, who was with the Covenanters, got a promise from the General to allow the people to disperse in peace; yet, notwithstanding this, he fell upon them in the most wanton and perfidious manner, but was defeated with a considerable loss, after a keen engagement, Middleton losing his military chest, which somehow had been buried in the moor, and which was accidentally come upon long years after. It was in the year 1685—"the killing time"—however, that one of the blackest tragedies which disgrace the annals of that evil time was enacted here. The wicked, cruel deed is thus related by William Crookshanks, in his "History" of those times.

"On the 6th of May 1685, Peter Gillies, in Muirendside, John Bryce, in West Calder, William Finneston, or Fiddison, and Thomas Young, both of the parish of Carluke, and John Bruning, were hanged upon one gibbet, without being suffered so much as to pray at their death. Peter Gillies suffered considerably for his nonconformity during some of the preceding years, but the day before the Highlanders came to Falkirk, Mr. Andrew Ure, the curate of Muirendside, got a party sent to his house next day. Accordingly he and John Bryce were both apprehended, and Peter was threatened with immediate death, in presence of his wife, who was brought to bed but a few days before, and was hurried away without being suffered to speak to her, or to change his clothes. . . . They rifled the house, and took whatever they could carry with them, except some Bibles, which they threw away. The two men were tied together and driven before them. When they got about a few miles, they tied a napkin about Peter's face, set him on his knees with a file of musqueteers before him, and kept him half-an-hour in this

posture, and then carried him to the west country. As they marched through the parish of Carlisle, they apprehended William Finneston and Thomas Young, and carried these four prisoners to Mauchline, and seized one John Bruning, keeping some cattle, and took their Bibles from them. They were examined by Lieutenant-General Drummond, indicted on the 5th of May, and a jury of fifteen soldiers was impanelled, who, on the 6th, condemned them to be hanged at the town's end; which being done, the soldiers and two countrymen made a hole in the earth, and threw them all in together."

When such deeds of horrid cruelty were then of daily occurrence, it does not seem wonderful that the Covenanters should about this time have published "The Apologetic Declaration and Admonitory Vindication," which declared war in their own defence against those who maliciously and wickedly thirsted for their blood, though while doing so they declared their abhorrence of all private revenge and assassination; and though in it they disowned the oppressive, tyrannical government of the time, they still owned magistracy and lawful authority. In the "Declaration" they, however, say, "We do however declare unto all, that whosoever stretcheth forth their hands against us, by shedding our blood, and to all civil and military power, who make it their work to embrue their hands in our blood, or by obeying such commands, such as bloody militiamen, malicious troopers, etc., likewise such gentlemen and commons who ride and run with the foresaid persons to lay search for us, or who deliver any of us into their hands, to the spilling of our blood, by inciting morally, or stirring

up enemies to the taking away of our lives, by informing against us wickedly, wittingly and wilfully, such as viperous and malicious bishops and curates, and all such sort of intelligencers, who raise the hue and cry after us, we say all and every one of such shall be reputed by us enemies of God, and the covenanted work of Reformation, and punished as such according to our power, and the degree of their offence." This Declaration was published in 1684, four years before the glorious Revolution, and in the most bloody, dark and dismal days of the persecution; and yet, even then, when to all ordinary eyes not one ray of hope could be seen in the future, it is wonderful with what fully assured confidence in the dawn of a better and a brighter day, they thus closed this "Declaration"—"The sinless necessity of self-preservation, accompanied with a holy zeal for Christ's reigning in our land, and suppressing of profanity, will not let you (the persecutors) pass unpunished. *And, moreover, we are fully persuaded, that the Lord, who now hideth Himself from the house of Jacob, will suddenly appear, bring light out of darkness, perfect strength out of weakness, and cause judgment to return again to righteousness. Let King Jesus reign, and all His enemies be scattered !*"

It was but four years after this, that the most cruel and black-hearted of all the Kings of Europe, King James VII., lost his kingdom and his crown, and had

to fly away from both, in the ignominious manner so well described by the talented lady author of "Lays of the Kirk and Covenant,"—

" Ay ! gnash thy teeth in impotence ! the fated hour is come,
And ocean, with her strength of waves, bears the avenger
home ;
See ! eager thousands throng the shore, to hail the advancing
fleet,
While baffled Dartmouth vainly strives the heaven-sent foe
to meet—
And post on hurrying post crowds fast, with tidings of dismay,
How the glassed waters lull to aid the landing of Torbay—
Away ! prepare thy coward flight, thy sceptre scourge cast
down—
The sea pursues thee with 's curse—thou king without a
crown !"

The Martyr's Tomb at Mauchline is on a green called "The Loan," at the east end of the town. Posterity has not been unmindful of these humble men, who suffered here for the rights of conscience and for civil and religious liberty. A low flat stone had long marked their resting place, but as it was beginning to decay, in 1830, a more enduring and a better protected monument was raised over their dust by willing and ready subscribers, and securely railed in. On this stone we are also rather needlessly told that the old stone with the above inscription lies below, and that the new one was erected by subscription. This is the inscription on the monument—

" Here lies the bodies of Peter Gillies, John Bryce, Thomas Young, William Fiddison, and John Bruning, who were apprehended and hanged without trial at Mauchline, anno 1685,

according to the then wicked laws, for their adherence to the Covenanted work of Reformation.—Rev. xii. 11.

“ Bloody Dumbarton, Douglas and Dundee,
Moved by the Devil and the Laird of Lee,
Dragged these five men to death with gun and sword,
Not suffering them to pray nor read God’s Word ;
Owning the Word of God was all their crime.
The eighty-five was a saint-killing time.”

In no place in Scotland is the monument of any of her martyred sons better preserved ; and yet, only a few years ago an anonymous writer, and virulent though ignorant maligner of the Covenanters, stated exultingly in one of the Glasgow evening papers that he had seen the women of the town chipping pieces off the Martyr’s Monument with which to rub their door steps ! The story, however, was an entire fiction, which, when pressed by the writer, he was forced to confess in the same paper in which it had been made.

It does not lie in our way here to speak of the connection of the poet Burns with Mauchline ; but when recently there viewing the surrounding landscape both from Mossiel and Welton Hill, it surprised us that the poet, with such an extensive and entrancing prospect continually before his eyes, was not more in rapture with nature and her beauties, and far greater as a descriptive poet, than he ever showed himself to be. While not insensible to the charms of the lovely landscape, neither the beauties nor the sublimities of the earth seem to have impressed him half so much as the nest of a mouse, a wounded hare, the “ourie

~~as the nest of a mouse, a wounded hare, "the curie cattle"~~ in winter, or, more than all, the charms of lovely women. Would that he had been able to look upon the female sex with purer eyes! From Mauchline, or Welton Hill, and Mossziel, a most extensive prospect delights the pilgrim who has come to view these places. Far away in the south the eye can take in a wide stretch of varied landscape, and on the very verge of the horizon a long and lofty range of blue undulating hills, reaching away into Galloway, and those also in the nearer distance which mark the sources of the Nith and the Afton. On the east the view is bounded by the lofty Cairntable, and the other hills which mark the springs of the infant Ayr and the classic Lugar. To the north the eye travels over a finely inclosed and well cultivated country, until it rests on the dark moors of Fenwick, and far away in the dim distance the lofty and blue summit of many a highland Ben. Down in the west stretches as fair and lovely a landscape as ever the eye of painter or poet rested upon, while far below, the waters of the Firth of Clyde glow at summer's eve, like a "sea of glass mingled with fire;" while around the rocky peaks of the great Goatfell, the rays of light and the radiant sunbeams flicker and play, until the twilight deepens into darkness, and the drowsy night wraps the world in gloom.

It would be interesting to know if Robert Burns,

during his sojourn at Mossiel, ever stood beside this humble tombstone at Mauchline, and expended a thought upon the men who, even then, had been sleeping there for a century outside the “hallowed churchyard,” or if he cared at all to consider the cause for which they and the other Covenanters contended and laid down their lives on scaffold and on field. He has not much to say about these men of renown and truest champions of liberty, only that “the solemn League and Covenant cost meikle blood and tears,” or something of this sort. Their memories, however, are as safe and are as lastingly enshrined in the hearts of their countrymen as if he had expended his great powers in proclaiming their worth and portraying their struggles, and we can rest well assured that—

“ Their names, their memory, their renown,
Shall pass to latest ages down.”





CHAPTER VI.

THE COVENANTERS OF LITTLE BLACKWOOD.

An' aye the robin sang by the wud,
An' his note had a waesome fa';
An' the corbie croupit in the clud,
But he durstna light ava;

Till out cam the wee grey moudiwart
Frae neath the hollow stane,
An' it howkit a grave for the auld grey head,
For the head lay a' its lane!

But I will seek out the robin's nest,
An' the nest of the ouzel shy,
For the siller hair that is beddit there
Maun wave aboon the sky.—JAMES HOGG.



N one of the recent works on the martyrs of the Covenant, we are told that "Little Blackwood is a farmhouse in Fenwick, now fallen down." This is a mistake, for there is not, and we believe never was, any place of this name in this moorland parish. There are, however, several places which bear this name in the neighbouring parish of Kilmarnock, though at a considerable distance from any part of Fenwick. The farmhouses of Little Blackwood have long since disappeared. They stood quite near to the farmhouse now known as Dykes-

croft, and which, though little more than two miles from the busy and smart town of Galston, to the north, is nevertheless in the parish of Kilmarnock, from which it is distant nearly five miles, and about due east of it. At this place, Little Blackwood, a tragic and dark deed of blood was enacted in the year 1685. Some twelve of the Covenanters,—or Society men, as they were sometimes called,—had met here for prayer; but intelligence of the meeting had somehow been conveyed to the garrison at Newmilns, two miles to the east of Galston, and, while they were at their devotions, they were surprised by Captain Inglis and a party of soldiers. In attempting to escape from the house, and fly for safety to the deep, woody, and rocky ravine of Polbaith, which is only a little way off, James White, the farmer, who led the way, was shot dead on the spot; and while two only managed to effect their escape, the rest were taken prisoners and conveyed to the castle at Newmilns. The body of James White was left where it fell, but Peter Inglis, the captain's son, who seems to have been a sort of "human fiend," cut off the good man's head, and taking it with him to Newmilns, next day amused himself by playing at football with it on the green of this ancient burgh of barony. The headless body of White was taken by his friends to Fenwick, and interred in the churchyard there (of which we shall speak in another chapter), where a monument

stands to his memory. Where the head was buried, if buried it ever was, no one now can tell, but the dust of God's dear saints being precious in His sight, the place is well-known to Him, and we can hardly doubt that heavenly, holy watchers often hover about the place, though all unseen by mortal eye, and that it is of far greater interest to them than any sculptured tombs in the grandest of our cathedral fanes.

For long years after, the very spot where James White fell was known and pointed out, but the plough has passed over it now, and it can never more be known. Down till two years ago the farm, in its changed name, continued in possession of James White's descendants; and we have heard the late Mr. John White tell how that the houses of Little Blackwood were in ruins before his father got possession of the lands, now nearly a century ago, and how he removed these ruins, while his son, years afterwards, had dug out the foundations, and afterwards passed his plough over the place where his covenanting ancestor had fallen, which till then had always been remembered and pointed out with awe. Long years ago, when a boy, we have stood and held our breath with undefinable feelings at the place, although, being in an open field, we could not go quite to the spot now. Often, however, have we roamed through the length and depths of the Polbaith ravine, or bank, as it is generally named, into which the two covenanters

who escaped are said to have fled and to have found shelter and protection from their iron-hearted persecutors. It is situated a little way to the south-west of Dykescroft, is traversed from east to west by a large brook of the same name, and is nearly a mile in length. The banks of the stream there are steep as well as deep, and on the southern side sometimes rocky, and then as now it was clothed with noble trees, under which the copsewood grew, as it still grows, close and luxuriously. A sweeter spot for the poet or the painter to muse, to sketch, or to linger in, is hardly to be met with anywhere in all the west. The waters of the stream are drawn from many a mountain rill which comes wandering down from the moorlands of the east, pure and unpolluted by grim coalpit or steaming factory, and as they pass on through this fair and peaceful spot, they go singing along with a face as clear and shining as the stars of the stilly summer night, which glimmer and look coyly down into its many pelucid and peaceful pools. In its way to join the Irvine water, some two miles farther on, it goes leaping away over a number of picturesque and sweetly sighing waterfalls, and down through several foaming, whirling, and boiling rapids; and nowhere are the shy little wrens so numerous as in the mossy brows and hazely banks which rise on either side of the whirling pools beneath, in which a believer in our northern mythology might well fancy

that the fairies still come to bathe in the short though glorious nights of summer, decking themselves, doubtless, with the wild roses which gleam in the thickets, before they sail away once more upon the wan moonbeams ere the morning dawn. Nowhere in the early year do the snowdrops bloom more luxuriantly, or the yellow primroses hold the silver dews of night longer in their tawny cups. In autumn, too, the red rowans glow in great clusters all through the glen, while the strawberries and the bramble fruit tempt the truant schoolboys from far to gather and taste their sweets. Although the place is sheltered even in winter, yet when the rains pour down, or when the snows upon the hills melt under the soft south winds, the waterfalls lift up their voices like strong giants in their wrath, and their wild rush and roar are heard far off on the mountain heights, or down on the plains below.

A little way to the east of Dykescroft we come to those lone, bleak, and wild moorlands which stretch from Eaglesham by Lochgoon on to Loudoun Hill and Drumclog, and, with hardly an interruption, through the upland solitudes of Kyle, and away into the sweet green pastoral wastes of Galloway, which, in these persecuting times, were so often frequented by the wanderers who, because of their covenanting principles, were forced to fly to these for shelter from those who thirsted to spill their blood.

The bonnie “woods and braes” of Loudoun are at no great distance to the south, but of these, and of its palatial castle, and of its good Earl, we shall speak when we come to describe Newmilns and its covenanting memories.

As we have already stated, the descendants of the martyr of Little Blackwood continued to possess the place, with some land added to it down to the present day—Mr. John White, an aged and honoured elder of the Free Church dying there (at Dykescroft) some two years ago. We have a distinct recollection of his father, also a most worthy man, who, in these days—before the Disruption—was a member of, and clung lovingly to the State Church. He had several sons, and one, Robert, who was the pride of the old man’s eye, was educated for the ministry, and was licensed to preach, but fell consumption—that unconquerable scourge of our country—seized upon him and dragged him down to the grave at an early age, full half a century ago, a strange and weird circumstance taking place at his burial.

After receiving licence to preach, he officiated for a short time as assistant to the Rev. Mr. Wodrow of Dreghorn—a descendant of the historian. Soon, however, the insidious disease laid such firm hold upon him that he was forced to return to his father’s house to seek for restoration to health; but he only came there to die, though for months both he and

his friends, and most of all his father, who doted on him exceedingly,

“ Hoped against hope, but vainly looked around,
In search of help which never could be found.”

The end came at last, however ; consumption prevailed over all medical skill, and the grave claimed the tall, mild-looking and most promising young man. The place of interment was Kilmarnock, and from that town a hearse had been ordered to be at Dykescroft at a certain hour on the day of interment. Through some inconceivable mistake, however, the hearse was sent away to the farm of Dykes, lying between the villages of Symington and Dundonald, and five miles on the different side of Kilmarnock from Dykescroft, appalling the dwellers there by driving up to the farmhouses with its nodding plumes and its jet black horses, and wheeling round and backing to the door as if to receive a coffin ! Surprised explanations soon made it plain, however, that the driver had mistaken Dykes, near Symington, for Dykescroft, near Galston ; and horrified to find that then, at the very hour fixed for the funeral, he was ten miles away from the place, he put his horses into a gallop and started for Dykescroft, terrifying the whole peasantry on the way by the altogether unusual sight of a hearse with its sable plumes and foam-crested horses flying across the country at such a terrible pace ; and not a few of them recalled to mind the awe-inspiring tales they

had listened to "when winter nights were dark and long," about "the Laird of Cool's Ghost," or the hearse bearing the body of the old persecuting Earl of Culzean along the rolling surface of the sea, straight onward to the burning mountain of Etna; and many a stripling left the highway and fled far across the fields, as the swaying hearse and the madly panting and snorting black steeds came in sight and hurried past.

At Dykescroft the greatest consternation prevailed among the friends, and also among the large general company which had come to pay the last tribute of respect to the promising young man. Anxiously did they look and wait, and look and wait again, and yet again, until at last, all hope of the hearse arriving being gone, they were obliged to put one of the farm horses and a cart into requisition, and in this manner to start for the place of interment. They had, however, proceeded only about a mile on their way when the hearse met them, the horses all white with foam, having been lashed into a furious gallop for such a distance. Into it the coffin was then transferred, and the funeral train passed on to the place of graves,—few now remembering the young minister who had "died before his time," or the strange event which took place at his funeral.



CHAPTER VII.

THE LUGAR, BELLO, AND BELLO-PATH.

"They wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."—**HEBREWS xi. 38.**

Such were the hinds thy hills who trod,
Strong in the love and fear of God,
Defying, through a long dark hour,
Alike the craft and rage of power,
Till, by their bright example charmed,
Even passive cowardice was warmed,
And dodging downright selfishness
Assumed the patriot's stern address.
By which, imprest with awful dread,
The priest-rid, poltroon tyrant fled,
Leaving his friends to gaze upon
A court dissolv'd, a vacant throne.
In every vale, on every hill,
Unquench'd these feelings linger still,
And shall, we fervent hope and pray,
Yet save thee on a future day.—**JOHN STRUTHERS**



REVIOUS to the occurrence, it could hardly have been predicted that the desert moors, "where no man dwelt," would become the natural bulwarks of our national liberties, and that freedom would there find a refuge from her foes, and entrench herself in the most calamitous times, and in the days of the Church's severest trial, and that there the battle of freedom would be fought and won, and

that the Church, kept alive in the furnace, would, after a prolonged period of persecution and suffering, come forth once more to liberty and light, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

After the disastrous defeat of the Covenanters at Bothwell—and more so still, after the publishing of the first famous Sanquhar Declaration and the death of Richard Cameron the year after—the fires of persecution were fanned into a redoubled flame, and "the poor persecuted remnant" having after these events become utterly broken up and disorganised as a party, the few brave and faithful spirits among them, who refused and scorned "the black indulgence," and who, as regarded their civil rights also, showed themselves to the world as—

"The men who dared alone be free
Amidst a nation's slavery,"

holding fast to their birthrights, and taking their lives in their hands, they went out unmurmuringly into the lonely fastnesses of the hills, and into hiding places among desert moors, and there, for conscience' sake, endured cold and hunger and perils manifold, often searched for by night and hunted by day by a cruel, ruthless soldiery, where, when caught, they were frequently put to death without even the shadow of trial, or, when such was granted them, it was only so in name and altogether a mockery. Not only do the

grey tombstones, which so thickly stud the mountains and moors of the south and west of Scotland, testify to these deeds of blood, but there is hardly a hill or a valley in all that wide district which has not its tradition of "conventicles" held there in these evil times of hairbreadth escapes or of heart-rending butcheries perpetrated in cold blood, not only upon the hardy, strong-limbed peasants of our land, but upon young lads and grey-haired fathers, and well has the poet said that—

"'Mid taunt and scorn they died—they died
By desert stream and lone hillside.'"

No place in all the country was more frequently traversed by the Covenanters in these days of peril and of dread than the uplands of Kyle, in Ayrshire, and the adjoining and equally desert districts of the counties of Lanark and Dumfries. Around the sources of the Nith, the Ayr, the Lugar, and the Bello waters, lie large stretches of bleak moors and long ranges of lonely, rugged hills, where oft at midnight hour, or when the storm careered along the wilds, the Covenanters would meet to worship God, "as conscience pointed out the way;" and many a hollow among the hills is yet shown by the shepherds and peasants of these localities, as the places where Cameron preached or Renwick baptised. One of the most noted of these is Connor Linn, far up among the hills near to the source of the Lugar, or rather of the Glenmuir, for

the name of Lugar is not given to the stream until its junction with the Bello (which is nearly of equal size), a little way above the village of Lugar, and about two miles east of Old Cumnock. This, the Glenmuir branch of the stream, rises far out in an un-frequented wild, near to the eastern end of the large parish of Auchinleck, and about midway between the royal burgh of Sanquhar and the town of Muirkirk. So deep is the solitude, and so untrodden is the way, that few have stood beside the springs of the infant stream, far out among the pathless wilds of Auchtytenc. Here the country is lonely in the extreme, and most uninviting in appearance, for it is one wild dark flat of dreariest moorland, with hardly a hill of any considerable elevation to break its dull and lifeless monotony. Cairntable, indeed, looms into view in the north, but, as the table land from which it is here seen is itself very elevated, it looks only like a hill of no great height. Its southern side, too, being not at all precipitous when viewed from the south, has a very uninteresting look. It slopes far out into the desert, is rough and spongy, and in most places is covered over with long dark heather, which only for a little while in autumn is at all beautiful; and then indeed, when not only the whole hill, but all the moor beneath, far as the eye can reach, seems robed in one vast vest of purple, this desert scene is one of almost incomparab'e beauty, although by its sameness

it soon wearies the eye of the stranger, and brings a deep indescribable melancholy over the heart. Still, in gazing upon it, the poetical mind can fully sympathise with the tastes of the “brown dwarf” of Dr’ Leyden’s beautiful ballad, “The Cout of Keeldar,” when he says—

“ ‘Tis sweet beneath the heather-bell,
To live in autumn brown ;
And sweet to hear the lavrock’s swell
Far far from tower and town.”

When the stream first begins to seek a way through the wild, it is soon met and joined by other little struggling rills, and before it has travelled far, it has become a rivulet of considerable size, and by the time it has reached Connor Linn, a few miles to the north-west, it is (when heavy rains fall, or when the snows of winter melt) a formidable and a strong raging torrent. At the bottom of this black, rocky, and sublime ravine, the holy Alexander Peden was wont to baptise the children of the covenanting peasantry of the district. Here the stream, rushing down the face of the hill, through long ages, has scooped out a dreadful caldron among the black rocks, into which the waters fall and boil from a great height, which, when the stream is in flood, is a sublime sight. The sides of this great cleft in the rocks used to be covered with copse-wood, though now however it has almost entirely disappeared. The scene is thus described by

John Wright, the unfortunate Galston poet, in his noble poem “The Retrospect”—

“ The varied pastime, and the heart’s soft swell
O’er hidden beauty—sweetest to explore—
Deep, dark, wild, woody Connor, thou canst tell,
Oh ! thou canst tell, but never canst restore !
Still roll thy peaceful waters to the shore ;
Still bloom thy green bowers on the rocky rise,
Where hewn hath giant hand thy caverns hoar ;
And green the grove whose birds of varying dyes
Still sing thy summer past, and war with wintry skies.”

The farm house of Glenmuirshaw stands a little way below Connor Linn, and here a little holm or meadow in front of the lone secluded dwelling is still pointed out, where the youthful Renwick frequently preached in his weary wanderings among the wilds, in times which have been justly described by the poet as those of “darkness and blood.” Preaching, praying, and praising God in these out-of-the-way, waste, and desert places, and still holding fast not only by their religious faith, but by their covenanted polity, both ecclesiastical and political, and corresponding also as opportunity offered with their exiled friends in Holland, the true Church was forced to abide many days in the desert witnessing for Christ, until at length the calm, brave, and dauntless Prince of Orange was, in the providence of God, prevailed upon to espouse the cause of freedom, and of the down-trodden and persecuted people of Britain, and to come over to their aid, the result of which, as every one knows,

was the glorious Revolution, which brought peace to our land and safety to her people, whose blood had so long been shed like water on scaffold and in wilderness. And yet we have clergymen (professedly Protestant) in Scotland, at the present time, telling us that, "in no respect can the Covenanters be looked upon as witnesses for Christ!" Verily, the infection which attaches to evil, pernicious principles, propagated too, of old, by the most dishonest means, appears yet to keep lingering in certain localities; and surely one of the greatest wonders and most melancholy signs of the times is, to find a clergyman of the Church of Scotland defending the conduct and lauding the virtues of that time-serving traitor, James Sharp, the justly loathed Archbishop of St. Andrews, who was the cause of an untellable amount of cruelty, bloodshed, and misery in Scotland.

From Connor Linn and the lonely Glenmuirshaw the Glenmuir water holds on its way westward down a long thinly peopled pastoral valley, past the grey old ruin of Kyle Castle, whose history is lost amid the mists of antiquity, and, a mile above its junction with the Bello, it enters a sublime and rugged ravine where some terrible convulsion of nature has riven a way for the water in the flinty rock, so deep and strange, that no action of the water itself could ever have worn in millions of ages. The rock is of blue and hardest whinstone, and the gorge—nearly a mile

in length—is narrow and of great depth. The sides are steep and precipitous, though here and there, on ledges of the rock, where there is any soil, the copse-wood grows luxuriantly. All within the water-mark, both sides and bottom, have been worn as smooth as glass; and in the spring-time of the year, when the stream is low, it is both a delight and a surprise to pass along the bottom of the stream, and to view the numerous strange basins in the stone, where the crystal water rests or whirls and plays in its strange and sublime passage to the all-absorbing sea. Here, too, may be picked up many stones, large and small, of every conceivable and fantastic shape and form, all of them as smooth as satin, while numbers of them are often found formed like living things.

The Bello water—another head of the Lugar—rises on the northern side of wild hills, and away in the direction of Airsmoss and “Cameron’s Stone,” and on its way to join the Glenmuir, passes near to Grass-water, where Richard Cameron preached only eighteen days before his death, and within sight of the place of his heroic death. Until it nears its junction with the other, its course is bare, dreary, and uninviting, but as it approaches this place, and passes through Bello-path, its banks grow steep and woody, and during the last two or three hundred yards its waters are hemmed in between black, grim rocks, frequently, however, covered with brushwood. At last it rushes

down a dark, deep, narrow rent in the rock, fleet as an arrow, and with a roar which is very terrible to hear when the stream is in high flood. It then joins the Glenmuir, where these two streams lose their names, and the Lugar properly begins.

A short distance above this place, to the east, and in the Bello ravine, a conflict took place, in June 1688, between the King's troops and the Covenanters, in which the latter were victorious.

A few years before, one David Houston, a preacher of whom very little is known, belonging to the north of Ireland, had been accepted by the societies to preach among them, along with Mr. James Renwick. After labouring in Scotland for some time he returned to Ireland, where he was apprehended, and after being kept in prison there for several months, and cruelly treated, as all such prisoners then were, he was brought to this country to be tried at Edinburgh, where the Covenanters felt fully assured he would be put to death, as the pious and devoted Renwick had been only a few months before. Being taken thither by way of Ayrshire, the soldiers who guarded him, and who were all mounted, reached Old Cumnock on the evening of the 19th June, and put up at the Blue Tower, then the principal, if not indeed the only inn in the place. This house, which stood in Tower Street, at the south back of the square (then, however, the churchyard), continued to stand as it then was

till a quarter of a century ago, although it had long ceased to be an inn. It was a large, dingy, two-storey thatched house. About the time named it was taken down, one being erected on the same site, which still retains the name.

The Covenanters of the locality, like the people still, never wanting in energy and courage, learning that the soldiers, with their prisoner, were to remain there during the night, at once set about taking prompt measures to rescue the minister on the morrow, when passing through Bello-path—the only road they could take—on their way to Edinburgh. Accordingly some of the towns-people, with numbers of the bravest and most devoted of the sturdy farmers of the district, resolved to lie in wait for the soldiers, among the rocks and brushwood which overhangs the narrow pathway and the deep, dark ravine. The road has been cut, widened, and made much less steep at its eastern end since then. A boy named Arthur, belonging to the town, and who, like Asahel of old “was as light of foot as a wild roe,” was employed to watch the movements of the soldiers, and to run on before, unobserved, and give notice to the Covenanters, lying armed in the Pass, whenever the soldiers left the town with their prisoner.

Proceeding on their way, and dreading no attack, the soldiers were allowed to enter the narrow jaws of the glen without seeing or hearing any signs of oppo-

sition, but once fairly within the dark defile, a volley of musquetry was poured in upon them by the Covenanters who lined both sides of it. Several of the soldiers fell; and though they fired upon their assailants, they were thrown into disorder, and fled, leaving their prisoner in the hands of the victors. Being bound upon the horse which carried him, he was thrown from his seat (but could not free himself from it), and was borne along for a space with his head under the horse's belly, and striking the ground, giving him such injuries as to weaken his mind, and ultimately cause his death, which took place in Ireland —to which he returned—shortly after the Revolution. The only one of the Covenanters who was mortally wounded in the fight was John M'Geaghan, the tenant of Meikle Auchingibbert, a farm little more than a mile due south of Bello-path. Although victorious, the Covenanters well knew that reinforcements would soon be brought to the place, and so, after the rescue, all who had taken part in it made haste to look to their own safety.

In a "Revolution Centennial Jubilee Sermon," preached in 1788 by the then minister of Auchinleck, we find this passage, which painfully illustrates the lawless and ruthless cruelty of the times,—"I have conversed with old people who remembered that skirmish at Bello-path; particularly a farmer in Dickston, who told me that he and another boy were in

the fields herding cattle at Barglachan, the day after that skirmish ; that the dragoons, searching for the Whigs, * came there, and finding nobody in the farmhouse (for all the farmers and others had fled with their horses), came to them and ordered them to tell where the Whigs had hid themselves ; for so the persecuted people were called. The boys knew of none ; and, as he observed, it was well so ; for said he, ‘the dragoons threatened us, and swore if we did not tell they would instantly shoot us.’ Accordingly they laid hold on the two boys, bound their hands behind their backs, tied napkins on their faces, set them on their knees, and proposed instantly to put them to death. The boys cried pitifully, protested their ignorance, and were at last set free.”

Though mortally wounded, John M’Geaghan was able to crawl from the field, and had reached Stone-park, a farm only a little way from his own house. Utterly exhausted, he asked to be taken in, but this was most unfeelingly refused for fear of the soldiers,

* To this name is appended the following curious and interesting note :—“So called, not from the far-fetched ill-founded reason Bishop Burnet gives, but because the greatest regale of the poor people was the watery, thin, cooling fluid, which, when cream has stood for several days in a churn, gathers to the bottom ; in which the country people then kept a cock and pin, and gave to the thirsty. The destitute and persecuted were glad of such refreshment. Hence their enemies, by way of derision, called them Whig Drinkers, Whiggers, and Whigs ; and in process of time, all strugglers for liberty were, and often now are, called Whigs.”

who they knew would soon be scouring the country in pursuit of those concerned in the rescue. Tradition also asserts that they refused him even water or a drink of milk which he had asked for, and that he was allowed to die at only a little distance from the door of the house, where he was also buried. Often have we heard the peasants, with awe in their looks, and in an undertone of voice, tell how that the cattle of Stonepark would give little or no milk since ; and, strangely enough, no regular milk stock of cows has ever been kept on the farm (which has now for some time been joined to another) within the memory of man.

Over the good and brave man's grave a small monumental stone was set up, but not for fully a generation after his death. This old stone now lies loosely on the grass, and the inscription on it, when last we visited the spot, was all but illegible. It is as follows :—"Here lies John M'Geaghan, who, for his constant adherence to the Word of God, prosecuting the ends of our National and Solemn League and Covenant, and appearing for the rescue of Mr. David Houston, one of the persecuted ministers of the Gospel, —was shot at Bello-path by a party of Bloody Dragoons, July 28, 1688. Erected anno 1728."

The date of the battle has been wrongly given on the stone, doubtless through ignorance on the part of those concerned in its erection, there being then fewer

written accounts of the matter, and like events, than are now to be met with.

In 1836 a sermon was preached here by the former minister of Catrine—the Rev. Mr. Currie—and from the proceeds of the collection a new stone was set up over the patriot's grave; but the old inscription has not been put upon it, nor one at all suitable. This might be done yet, and means taken to enclose it and to protect the grave.

Hardly half a mile below, and to the west of Bellopath, is Bellomill, the residence of one who was both a genius and a real benefactor of his country, and of the world. It was here that William Murdoch, the inventor of gas, was born, in August 1754. The old house still stands, and the cave in which he conducted and perfected his experiments is close behind it, on the northern bank of the Lugar. Murdoch afterwards went to England, and entering the employment of Watt and Bolton, of steam-engine notoriety, he rose to high eminence by his mechanical inventions, and as the associate of these great men. He died at Handsworth, in the year 1839.

In a former chapter we have spoken of Cumnock and its Covenanters, and so we pass it by now. Dumfries House, in the reign of Charles II., was the residence of Robert, sixth Lord Crichton of Sanquhar. He was raised to the dignity of Earl of Dumfries; and his son William, the second Earl,

was made one of the Lords of the Privy Council. He was a most kind-hearted and excellent man, and did much to prevent the cruelties and persecutions of the times. The Rev. John Dun, of Auchinleck, (remembered for the ill-mannered attack made on him and presbytery by Dr. Samuel Johnson) relates how, “one day in Privy Council, amongst other names summoned to be fined, was read that of David Boswell, Laird of Auchinleck, upon which the Earl said,—‘David Boswell of Auchinleck, my worthy neighbour! What has he done?’ He was told that David had lately had a child baptized in the fields by one of the Whig ministers. ‘My Lords,’ says he, ‘I am sure that has not been David Boswell’s doing; it has been the doing of an old aunt of his. The aunt has got 18,000 merks, which he has the prospect of; and she, my Lords, has taken upon her to get the child baptized in that manner; but if you can get hold of his old aunt and hang her, take my word for it, David Boswell will turn Mahomedan if you please.’” This good Earl died, greatly lamented, in 1692.

Passing down the Lugar, the whole valley of which is covenanting ground, we come to Ochiltree House, beautifully situated at its confluence with the Burnock. Here, in March 1564, John Knox was married to his second wife, Margaret Stewart, a daughter of Lord Ochiltree; and here, one hundred and twenty years

after, on 10th June 1684, John Graham of Claverhouse ("the bluidy Claver'se" of a loathing peasantry) was married to Jane Cochrane, niece of Sir John Cochrane, leaving her that very day to hunt the "Whigs" in the moors around Cumnock. After her bloody and *fictitiously* brave husband met his well-deserved fate at Killiecrankie, and went to the bar of God to answer for his murder (and vaunt regarding it) of John Brown of Priesthill, and so many others, his widow married the Hon. William Livingstone of Kilsyth, and was killed, along with her infant, by the falling of a house in Holland, in October 1695. Their bodies were brought home and buried in a vault beneath the Church of Kilsyth. This vault was opened in 1795, just one hundred years after their interment, and the bodies of the two, which had been embalmed in Holland, were found to be in a most perfect state of preservation; the flesh firm, and neither it nor the clothes being in the least decayed. This lady, we may add, was the daughter of William Cochrane, son of the first Earl of Dundonald, who died before his father.

It was Sir John Cochrane who gave notice to Bruce of Earlshall as to the whereabouts of Richard Cameron, which led to the battle of Airsmoss, and the death of that most notable of the "hill preachers." It is related that Earlshall got £500, and Sir John Cochrane 10,000 merks, for managing this affair; but soon after,

when, in the early morning Ochiltree House (or castle, as it was then called) took fire, and was, with all the charters, plate, and valuables, burnt to the ground, one of the sons said to his father while the fire was raging, “This is the vengeance of Cameron’s blood.”

The caves associated with holy Alexander Peden, a little further down the Lugar, with its scenery, have been noticed by us already; and so, without describing them further, we close this chapter, praying, with the poet,

“ That never may the land whose flowers spring fresh from
martyrs’ graves,
A moment’s parley hold with Rome, her mimics, or her slaves;
A moment palter with the chains whose scars are on her yet,—
Earth must give up her dead again, e’er Scotland can forget.”





CHAPTER VIII.

THE AFTON, AND THE MARTYRS OF CAIRN.

On the breast of yon steep, lo ! the warrior's grey cairn;
Who bled for his country, still rising is seen ;
And, far 'mong the moorlands, the heath and the fern
Wave round where the grave of the martyr grows green.
And these are the mighty, the morally brave,
Who died an inheritance thus to convey
That is more than the wealth that can come by the slave,
And all that is found 'neath the dwellings of day.
'Twas the light of high heaven that fixed (though so frail)
The heart of humanity, still to withstand
The powerful and proud who with death would assail
The lowly and faithful that lived in the land.

HENRY SCOTT RIDDELL.



ITH not a few of those who aspire to be leaders in the Church of Scotland at the present day there is a tendency, while giving "faint praise" to the Covenanters for their steadfastness, to speak lightly of their sufferings throughout that long and dismal period of twenty-eight years, from the Restoration of King Charles II. till the bright and long prayed for Revolution, when the narrow-minded and cruel James who succeeded him fled from his kingdom, and was justly and ignominiously driven away and left to die in exile. They would have

us to believe that the Covenanters themselves were to blame for their sufferings, because they also were persecutors when in power, and that, therefore, they only received what they had formerly given to others when they themselves held the reins of power. We are pointed to the year 1637, when we are told that Episcopacy was the established religion of Scotland, but they take care not to tell us that it had been *forced* upon them by the king, though they well know that at the time this was done, at least nineteen-twentieths of the people were Presbyterians; and as has been well remarked (and there are numerous undeniable proofs of it), "No sooner was Episcopacy at any time set up in Scotland, than it began to persecute the Presbyterian Church." They forget to tell us how, in the year 1606, the pliant Parliament which met at Perth restored bishops, and went on at once to overturn the original constitution of the Church of Scotland; and how, in 1612, Parliament ordained that every minister was to swear at his admission to the Church that he declared the king to be the supreme governor of all causes, ecclesiastical as well as civil, and that they held their churches from His Majesty and from the crown royal of the realm. A few years after this came the notorious five articles of Perth. In the course of time the spiritual usurpations of the 1st and 2nd Charles followed, mingled with the basest perjuries, until the

betrayal of the Presbyterians by Mr. James Sharp, afterwards Archbishop of St. Andrews, when the fires of persecution began to be kindled, which burned fierce and more fiercely for more than a quarter of a century, until, latterly, if only men were caught in the fields with a Bible in their hands, they were shot down like dogs or beasts of prey, or hanged with far less semblance of a trial than was even then accorded to the most cruel malefactors !

Much has been made by those unfriendly to the Covenanters of the passing of the Act Recissory by the General Assembly in 1638, and this has been called an act of persecution on the part of the Covenanters ; but had the Act ordaining bishops not been annulled, then Presbyterianism must have continued to be illegal, so that the passing of the Act Recissory was an absolute necessity to the very existence of the Church of Scotland. To say then that the Covenanters only received what they had given before is as ungenerous as it is untrue ; and when they are accused of being persecutors, we would like to be shown when they ever tortured children, shot down peasants like John Brown, boys like George Wood, or drowned women like the martyr matron of Kirkinner and maiden of Wigton, or hung them in the air till dead, as was done to Marion Harvey and Isobel Allison, and all because they dared to think and act for themselves in religious and ecclesiastical matters !

To say that they ever persecuted in any such way is a libel against truth and history.

No district is richer in covenanting memories than the border-land of Dumfries and Ayrshire, and the upland valleys and solitary moorland tracks which lie along the lonely banks of the streams which there stray among the hills; and tradition (which lingers longer there than in any other locality) still points to places connected with incidents which occurred in these dismal times.

The Afton, having been sung of in pleasing strains by our national poet, is now known by name to the ends of the earth; and well is the valley and the stream worthy of all the praise which the greatest of all song-writers has bestowed upon them. Rising far up among the lonely and solemn-looking hills, it takes a northward course, pursuing its way for miles through glens without an inhabitant, and unvisited save by the shepherd at times looking after his flocks, or the anxious fisher plying his rod and line. Monthraw, which overlooks the infant stream, is the only house in sight, and it is distant fully three miles from any other dwelling. This lonely habitation is still spoken of as a frequent resort of the Covenanters, and lower down the valley, an almost precipitous part of Blackcraig hill is still wonderingly pointed out as the place along which the dread Claverhouse had ridden his war charger at

full gallop when in pursuit of some of the flying Covenanters. At the foot of this hill, which is fully 2400 feet in height, lie the farms of Craigdarroch and Craigs, quite contiguous to each other. On the face of the hill, above the latter farm, and quite near to the terrible path along which Claverhouse is said to have urged his horse, a curious discovery was made two years ago. The rock here, like every other thing, yielding to time, has been gradually wasting away. The shepherd being out one morning looking after his flock, one of the sheep, in crossing this part at a quick pace, and spurring hard with its feet to keep itself from falling, pushed away a portion of the decayed rock, when the shepherd, who stood at a considerable distance below, saw something glitter and shine with an unusual lustre in the morning sun. Scrambling up the hill as best he could to the place, he was astonished to find a number of broad gold coins scattered about. Further search in the face of the wasting rock brought to light a great many more, or near to two hundred in all. These, on hearing of the discovery, we went to see, and found them to be of the reign of Robert II., and as they were taken possession of by government, they proved quite a treasure to the shepherd, who was paid full value for them—all of them, though doubtless lying for centuries in the face of the rock, being in a perfect state of preservation. How, or by whom

they had been hidden there, in such an out-of-the-way place, can never, of course, be known. Tradition tells of a place called Castle William, about two miles deeper in the wild, and the coins may have been hidden by some owner of it when dreading an attack, or flying from some of his lawless, warlike neighbours.

Two miles further down the stream we come to Dalhannah, the proprietor of which, in the times of the Covenant, was one of the persecuted ones. Having escaped many perils, he lived till after the Revolution, and the estate is still in possession of his descendants of the same name, who adhere to the principles of their worthy ancestors. We remember the grandfather of the present proprietor—James Campbell by name—an ardent and exemplary Covenanter, riding or driving every Sabbath to the Original Secession Church at Auchinleck, a distance of nearly ten miles.

From Craigdarroch until it joins the Nith at New Cumnock, a distance of fully five miles, the course of the Afton (which has now become a very considerable stream) is one of the most beautiful which the eye can rest upon. The stream itself, when not in flood, is one of crystal purity, being unpolluted by factory or grim coalpit. Its pebbles and stones, too, are a bright blue, and lying between sweet green hills which come close in to its margin, with only here

and there a plantation, and some natural copsewood, and now and then a little holm of loveliest green. The waters make a peculiar and charmingly pleasant music, as they go gushing down the glen unceasingly for ever. Nowhere are more lovely and soft green pastoral hills to be met with, and in its lower course, with pleasant farmhouses every here and there, it looks more “the happy valley,” than that which the good though gruff Dr. Johnson describes in his celebrated eastern tale of “Rasselas.”

In early autumn the whole hills overlooking its course are bright and fragrant with a carpet of wild thyme, while from their summits—from that of the highest, Blackcraig, especially—a most extensive and delightful prospect is to be had when the air is pure and bright, as it often is at that season of the year. At one sweep the eye can take in the greatest part of Ayrshire, and many a spot which has been made dear to every patriot heart because of its connection with the martyrs and their struggles for liberty, fatherland, and life. Arran, Bute, and the lofty Ben Lomond can also be seen from its airy summit, with a long stretch of the fairy-like estuary of the Firth of Clyde, glowing in the westering sunbeams with a beauty which passes the power of any pen to describe. To the east Skiddaw can be descried, blue and beautiful in the distance, while to the south and south-west hills rise over hills, innumerable in multitude and

beautiful in their loneliness, and in what may be called their orderly though indescribable confusion. The heights which surround the sources of the Nith are also full in view to the west, and following the course of the stream till its junction with the Afton, we take in several localities which we have in part already described, especially the hill on which stands the tomb of the martyrs of Crossgellioch, the sight of which, with the Afton Glen, first induced us to attempt to tune the poet's reed, but we will not venture to give these youthful effusions here.

Following the Nith downwards from New Cumnock, and keeping the southern side of the stream until we are nearly directly opposite Corsancon Hill, we come to the Martyrs' Monument of Cairn, as it is called, although it is only on the border of the Cairn lands, for it stands on those of the farm of Wasteland. The monument which stands here is not the original one which was erected to the two martyrs—George Corson and John Hair, who were shot on the same day as the martyrs of Crossgellioch, and by the same party of evil men who had slain them. Well might the amiable author of that charming poem, "The Sabbath," call such like fiends "the men of blood." The two men belonged to the same locality—Kirkconnell—and were almost within sight of their own dwellings when they were thus ruthlessly shot down on the hillside, where they had been unexpectedly

come upon, and their being engaged in singing those divine Songs of Sion—the Psalms—at the time was deemed sufficient reason for taking their lives, without trial, like some dangerous beasts of prey. Hair was one of a family of five pious and devoted Covenanters, one of whom had fought and fallen at Pentland, when the others, in consequence of this, were ejected from their farm of Glenquaharry. Their descendants are still numerous in the district, and are still men of the best type, both morally and religiously. Of Corson less is known, but he belonged to the same parish as Hair, and with him sealed his testimony for liberty and truth with his blood.

Soon after the Revolution a large flat stone was placed over their dust, for, like most of the martyrs of that time, they were buried where they fell. A curious though painful story is related regarding this stone, which lay there till within the memory of men still alive, and which we have heard related with wondering awe by the peasantry of the place.

A farmer in the district who cared nothing for the Covenanters, whose houses were not good, and whose hearthstone was worse, cast his eye upon it, and thinking it would make a better hearth for his house than the one he had, most impiously and vilely had it removed from over the patriot dust which it had been placed to protect, and laid down in front of his kitchen fire; but the same evening when (as the custom is in

many farmhouses) some of the inmates were breaking a piece of coal upon it, the new hearthstone broke into scores of pieces; some of the servants, who had been horrified at the vandal act, crying out in their dismay and terror, that it was a judgment on the farmer for an act which they and all in the neighbourhood regarded with horror. There can be no doubt of the truth of the occurrence.

In 1845, the present stone which has been placed at the spot was erected from the proceeds of a collection made at a sermon preached there by the late Rev. Peter Carmichael, of the Reformed Presbyterian Church at Penpont, Dumfriesshire, who was a man of great and powerful eloquence, and a devoted son of the Covenant. The following is the inscription on this memorial stone:—

“In memory of George Corson and John Hair, who were shot near this place, for their adherence to Divine Truth and attachment to the Covenanted Reformation of 1638-50.

‘They lived unknown
Till persecution dragged them into fame,
And chased them up to heaven.’”

The traveller, as he passes along the great road between Ayr and Dumfries, can see the monument a little way to the south. Strangers wonder what it is, but nearly all those who know never gaze upon it without a sigh, yet with pride at the “faithful contendings” of our forefathers, who were so steadfast and unyielding in contending for the truth, which has

brought to us, their too often ungrateful descendants such a rich reward of liberty and security.

Standing here by this lonely grave, the valley of the Nith stretches wide away below, and, though bare, is exceedingly beautiful, the river here winding about in the most marvellous manner, and exceedingly like the links of Forth below Stirling, in miniature.

It is pleasing to know that the spirit of the martyrs is not yet dead among the farmers of the district, and that here, more than in most other places, we have Free Churchmen and elders of the true covenanting type of 1843, who cling to the principles which that Church then so nobly and so fully maintained, and to whom still "the blue banner of the Covenant" is very dear and very precious.





CHAPTER IX.

SANQUHAR, AND ITS "DECLARATIONS."

The lover of freedom can never forget,
The glorious peasant band,—
His sires,—that on Scotia's moorland met;—
Each name like a seal on the heart is set,
The pride of his Fatherland.—*HUGH BROWN.*

The martyrs wandered round their lonely cave,
Their home, their temple, and perchance their grave;
Till, in the lone and starless night of woes,
They darkly turned in fury on their foes;—
Reason may pause, and here their deeds condemn,
But what long years of sorrow led to them!
Patience has bounds, and suffering has its goal,
When vengeance, like a virtue, arms the soul.
Traduce them! yet Cargill's good name will shine
On fame's proud record, Cameron, with thine!
They deemed all sacred but the tyrant's laws;
They praying lived, and died in freedom's cause.—*Ibid.*



THE royal burgh of Sanquhar is a place of high antiquity, and, though always of very limited population, it has on several occasions, been the scene of great and important events, the influence of which has been far-reaching and of national importance. George Chalmers, in his *Caledonia*, tells us that Sanquhar first comes into notice in the ninth century. It received charters from Robert I. and

David II., and the first Lords of Sanquhar were cadets of the then powerful Earls of Ross and Lords of the Isles. Sanquhar Castle, or Crichton Peel (as it was often named from its succeeding owners), is evidently a very ancient stronghold. In the reign of Robert the Bruce, the barony of Sanquhar was divided between the families of Richard Edgar and William de Crichton. About the year 1360 the latter family acquired the whole lands, which, with the castle, they held for centuries. William, the seventh Lord Crichton of Sanquhar, was created Earl of Dumfries by King James VI., who in 1598 made the town a royal burgh.

The castle, which has long been in ruins (though still of imposing appearance even in this state), stands on a high green bank overlooking what was of old the course of the river Nith, which here (nearly twenty miles from its source in the south-western part of the parish of New Cumnock) is a stream of considerable size. Its ruins are still of large extent, its walls high, and of great thickness. These are of durable freestone, and have been bedded in lime which, even yet, is scarcely less hard than the stone itself. The lower part of it would seem to have been wholly arched, and thus made fireproof.

This castle, and the high position of those who inhabited it, made Sanquhar a place of no small importance in these olden times, though situated far

away from, and having little and difficult intercourse with, the busy world beyond, and with the distant capital. Even then, however (when the country around had not been beautified by landscape gardening and improved by tillage, as it is now), the place must have been exceedingly beautiful, with its pure river winding past, and its long line of solemn though picturesque-like hills stretching far along either side of the valley, and with the ravines which run up between the hills every here and there clothed with a close covering of copsewood—hazel, alder, mountain ash, and the long green and yellow fringes of the beautiful broom. All the hills in sight are finely pastoral, and mostly of a pleasing green in summer, while the tributary streams which here or within a little distance flow into the Nith, lend beauty to the landscape. The chief of these are the Crawick, the Euchan, and the Mennock, which end the lonely wanderings and windings which they take far out and through among the hills, amid sylvan scenery of surpassing beauty, as they draw near to their confluence with the Nith, which now passes the castle nearly half a mile to the south of its former course. It was on the banks of the Crawick that James Hyslop, the author of that grand and glowing poem, "The Cameronian's Dream," was born. In his equally excellent though less known poem, "The Scottish Sacramental Sabbath," he thus recalled to mind and

wrote of these streams which run among the hills,
when he was far removed from them—

“ Streams of my native mountains, oh ! how oft
That Sabbath morning walk in youth was mine ;
Yet fancy hears the kirk-bell sweet and soft
Ring o'er the darkling woods of dewy pine ;
How oft the wood rose wild, and scented thyme
I've stoop'd to pull while passing on my way ;
But now in sunny regions south the line
Nae bonnie broom-flow'rs shade the Summer brae,
Alas ! I can but dream of Scotland's Sabbath day.”

Poor Hyslop, after singing one of the noblest, and by far the most popular of all the poems which the Covenanters and their struggles have ever inspired, died far away from the scenes of his youth, “in torrid climes where Nature pants for breath,” at the early age of twenty-nine; but “The Cameronian’s Dream,” will keep his name green for ever, not only among his native glens, but throughout the whole of “martyr-sprinkled Scotland.”

Elliock House, little more than a mile to the east of the town of Sanquhar, was the birthplace of James Crichton, generally called “The Admirable Crichton,” who was born here considerably more than three centuries ago, and whose fame as a master of languages, science, and all the other accomplishments, or supposed accomplishments of the time, has come down to our own day. Unless, however, it was as the most dexterous swordsman of his time, it seems very doubtful if he was deserving of one half of the celebrity

which has followed his memory down to the present age, if at least he is to be judged by those writings of his which have come down to us. The apartment at Elliock House in which this supposed prodigy was born is still carefully preserved in its old original state, and the natural scenery around this ancient place is of the most pleasing and picturesque description, with unpolluted streams winding down glens closely covered with copsewood, or, "half hidden from the eye," through plantations of aged and enormous trees, until their waters are lost in the Nith, which here drains all the country from far out on either side of it.

It is, however, on account of its connection with the great Covenanting struggle of the seventeenth century, especially near the close of that dark and dismal period, that the town of Sanquhar is best and most widely known. Wodrow, the historian of those times, has told us how the persecuted people fled from the lower and more populous districts and sought shelter from the rage of their enemies in the uplands and among the mountain solitudes, especially in the south and west of Scotland, where "the rivers are but brooks," and where, on the great lone table-lands, these often depart to different seas. It was here, then, that these men "of whom the world was not worthy" so often wandered faint and hungry, having "none assurance of their lives." So frequently and so

wantonly even here, in the wilderness, was their blood then shed, that even in his day the earnest and pious Renwick could say—"The moors and mosses of the west of Scotland are flowered with martyrs." It was in such wildernesses that our forefathers met, often in the night season, to worship God, for then, as the poet of "The Sabbath" so well and so beautifully expresses it—

"No more
The assembled people dared, in face of day,
To worship God, or even at the dead
Of night, save when the wintry storm raved fierce,
And thunder peals compelled the men of blood
To couch within their dens ; then dauntlessly
The scattered few would meet in some deep dell
By rocks o'er canopied, to hear the voice,
Their faithful pastor's voice : He by the gleam
Of sheeted lightning op'ed the sacred book,
And words of comfort spake : Over their souls
His accents soothing came,—as to her young
The heathfowl's plumes, when at the closed eve,
She gathers in, mournful, her brood dispersed
By murderous sport, and o'er the remnant spreads
Fondly her wings ; close nestling 'neath her breast,
They cherished cower amid the purple blooms."

When our covenanting forefathers were not only driven from their churches, but their homes also, the dreary deserts became their great and spacious temple ; and here the power and the presence of the Almighty were, perhaps, more felt than these had ever been before, or at least were at that time, in any gorgeous fane in all the land. It was not, therefore, without good cause that the devoted Renwick said that "if

God could be confined to a place, it would be to these wildernesses." The solitudes around Sanquhar are both large and deep, as the eye can see from not a few of the mountain heights which rise around this ancient burgh. Not only is the great and lonely range of the Lowther hills within sight, the green hills of Durisdeer, the black heights of Wanlockhead, and the pastoral slopes of Kirkeconnel; but also those lofty tracks of Ayrshire which lie around the sources of the Nith and the Afton; and far away to the southwest, Cairnsmuir of Carsphairn, the highest of the Galloway hills. In such places the persecuted wanderers sought and often found a secure retreat from those who sought their lives. In those wilds the church suffered long,—here she became purified by persecution,—here at last she found favour with God and prevailed, and came forth from the furnace purified like the gold which has been seven times refined.

"The Sanquhar Declarations"—especially that of Cameron—have long made this quiet and lonely little burgh famous, for the casting off of allegiance to a sovereign is a momentous step, and Cameron and his party have long been severely, though most ignorantly, blamed for this daring though courageous act.

It should not be forgotten, in considering this, that there had been a compact made between the king and the people, and that it was on certain conditions that the latter had consented to give their allegiance to

the king, and that to these conditions the sovereign had not only agreed, but had solemnly sworn, with uplifted hand, in the following terms:—

“I Charles, King of Great Britain, France and Ireland, do assure and declare, by my solemn oath, in the presence of Almighty God, the searcher of hearts, my allowance and approbation of the National Covenant, and of the Solemn League and Covenant above written, and faithfully oblige myself to prosecute the ends thereof in my station and calling; and that I, for myself and successors, shall consent to agree to all Acts of Parliament enjoining the National Covenant and Solemn League and Covenant, and fully establishing Presbyterial Government, the directory of Worship, the Confession of Faith and Catechisms in the kingdom of Scotland, as they are approven by the General Assembly of this kirk and parliament of this Kingdom. And that I shall give my royal assent to the Acts of the Parliament enjoining the same in the rest of my dominions, and that I shall observe them in my own practice and family, and shall never make opposition to any of these, or endeavour any change thereof.”

This oath the king subscribed, though, after his restoration, the only regard which he paid to it was to cause these same solemnly sworn covenants to be publicly burned, and their supporters to be cruelly persecuted—imprisoned, fined, banished, tortured and

put to death. What wonder then that, after having endured such treatment for twenty years, and remembering that they also had sworn to further and maintain the principles and ends of the Covenants, they should at length disown the king and rise against his authority, seeing that with the most wanton cruelty he had put his foot upon the very constitution by which he had sworn to rule?

Some of the half-hearted Covenanters still held back. Cargill and Cameron, however, were not of these. A document drafted by the former called the "Queensferry paper" contained the first indication of this momentous step. After stating that those who had entered into agreement "reject the king and those associate with him in the government," it concludes by saying,— "We bind and oblige ourselves to defend ourselves, and one another, in our natural, civil, and divine rights and liberties."

The "Queensferry Paper," however, was only drafted, never published; but being found on the person of Mr. Henry Hall of Haughhead when apprehended, it filled the minds of the king and his rulers with thoughts of treason and rebellion, and created a very great stir in the country. This was in May, 1680, and in the following month a more carefully prepared document was drawn up by Richard Cameron and a number of his companions in tribulation. This they determined to publish to the

world ; and on the 22nd day of June 1680, Richard Cameron and his brother Michael, with about eighteen others, all armed, rode into the Royal Burgh of Sanquhar, and drawing up at the ancient market cross, two of them dismounted—the two Camerons—the rest forming round them; a psalm was sung by the warlike band, one of those grand old psalms which (as Lord Beaconsfield has so finely said), “cheered the men of Judah amid their glens, and in chanting which the Scotch upon their hillsides attained their religious freedom ;” after which a fervent prayer was offered up,—one of intensest earnestness, we may be sure,—when Michael Cameron read the famous “Declaration,” and having fixed a copy of it to the cross (the astonished dwellers of this quiet burgh looking on from an outer circle), they then rode away, little conscious, perhaps, that “what was treason that day would, only eight years afterwards, become the *Revolution Settlement!*”

As this famous *Declaration*, though published by those who seemed to be without power, made Charles II. tremble on his throne even then, and ultimately shook his cruel tyrant brother from it for ever, and as it is now but little known in these days, we give it here without abridgement :

“ *The Declaration and Testimony of the True
Presbyterian, Anti-Prelatic, Anti-Erastian,*

*persecuted party in Scotland. Published
at Sanquhar, June 22nd, 1680.*

“It is not amongst the smallest of the Lord’s mercies to this poor land, that there have been always some who have given their testimony against every cause of defection that many are guilty of; which is a token for good, that He doth not as yet intend to cast us off altogether, but that He will leave a remnant in whom He will be glorious, if they, through His grace, keep themselves clean still, and walk in His way and method as it has been walked in, and owned by Him in our predecessors of truly worthy memory; for their carrying on of our noble work of reformation, in the several steps thereof, from Popery, Prelacy, and likewise Erastian supremacy, so much usurped by him who, it is true, so far as we know, is descended from the race of our kings; yet he hath been so far debased from what he ought to have been, by his perjury and usurpation in church matters, and tyranny in matters civil, as is known by the whole land, that we have just reason to account it one of the Lord’s great controversies against us, that we have not disowned him, and the men of his practices, whether inferior magistrates or any other, as enemies of the Lord and His crown and the true Protestant and Presbyterian interest in this land—our Lord’s espoused bride and Church. Therefore, although we be for governments

and governors, such as the Word of God and our Covenant allow; yet we for ourselves, and all that will adhere to us, as representatives of the true Presbyterian Kirk, and covenanted nation of Scotland, considering the great hazard of lying under such a sin any longer, do, by these presents, disown Charles Stuart that has been reigning, or rather tyrannising, as we may say, on the throne of Britain these years bygone, as having any right, title to, or interest in the said crown of Scotland for government, as forfeited several years since, by his perjury and breach of covenant both to God and His kirk, and usurpation of His crown and royal prerogatives therein, and many other breaches in matters ecclesiastical, and by his tyranny and breach of the very *leges regnandi* in matters civil. For which reason we declare, that several years since he should have been denuded of being king, ruler, or magistrate, or of having any power to act or to be obeyed as such. As also we, being under the standard of the Lord Jesus Christ, Captain of Salvation, do declare a war with such a tyrant and usurper, and all the men of his practices as enemies of our Lord Jesus Christ, and His cause and covenants, and against all such as have strengthened him, sided with, or anywise acknowledged any other like usurpation and tyranny,—far more against such as would betray or deliver up our free, reformed mother Kirk unto the bondage of Antichrist the Pope

of Rome. And by this we homologate that testimony given at Rutherglen, the 29th of May 1679, and all the faithful testimonies of those who have gone before, as also of those who have suffered of late; and we do disclaim that Declaration published at Hamilton, June 1679, chiefly because it takes in the king's interest, which we are several years since loosed from, because of the foresaid reasons, and others which may, after this, if the Lord will, be published. As also we disown, and by this, resent the reception of the Duke of York, that professed Papist, as repugnant to our principles and vows to the Most High God, and as that which is the great though not alone just reproach of our Kirk and nation. We also, by this, protest against his succeeding to the crown, and whatever has been done, or any are essaying to do, in this land, given to the Lord, in prejudice to our work of reformation. And to conclude, we hope, after this, none will blame us for, or offend at, our rewarding those that are against us, as the Lord gives opportunity. This is not to exclude any that have declined, if they be willing to give satisfaction according to the degree of their offence."

This then is the "Declaration" which has made the small, secluded burgh of Sanquhar famous in history; but it is not the only "Declaration" which has been published there, for at least five others have been proclaimed at the ancient cross in that long, quiet street. There was the very important one by Renwick,

in May 1685, when with two hundred armed men he astonished and alarmed the people, by marching to the cross, and publishing one against James, the brother of Charles, succeeding to the throne, because he was an open and avowed Papist. As once more the Covenanters, their principles, and their conduct are being greatly misrepresented, we give here the concluding part of Renwick's Declaration, to show that they were lofty and pure-minded patriots, and that they loathed the shedding of blood, and held anything but "assassinating principles," as has often been said:—
"Finally, we being misrepresented to many, as persons of murdering and assassinating principles, and which principles and practices we do hereby declare before God, angels, and men, that we abhor, renounce and detest, as also all manner of robbing of any, whether open enemies or others, which we are most falsely aspersed with, either in their gold, their silver, or their gear, or any household stuff. Their money perish with themselves; the Lord knows that our eyes are not after these things.

"And in like manner we do hereby disclaim all unwarrantable practices committed by any few persons reputed to be of us, whereby the Lord hath been offended, His cause wronged, and we all made to endure the scourge of tongues, for which things we have desired to make conscience of mourning before the Lord, both in public and private."

Of the other "Declarations" one was published in August 1692, the next in November 1695, the third of these minor ones in May 1703, and the last in 1707.

The old cross has been long since removed, but on the spot where it stood a fine granite obelisk, eighteen or twenty feet high, was erected in 1864, with the following inscription—

In Commemoration of
THE TWO FAMOUS
SANQUHAR DECLARATIONS
WHICH WERE PUBLISHED
ON THIS SPOT, WHERE STOOD
THE ANCIENT CROSS OF THE BURGH:

THE ONE BY
THE REV. RICHARD CAMERON
on the 22nd of June 1680;

THE OTHER BY
THE REV. JAMES RENWICK
on the 25th of May 1685,

THE KILLING TIME.

If you would know the nature of their crime,
Then read the story of that killing time.

The town of Sanquhar has an ancient look about it, and a dull heavy air seems to pervade the place; and both it and the people look as if the remembrance of these old sorrowful times sat like a weight upon them

still. The long main street is as dull as any Dutch village at noon on a hot summer day; and somehow the very children in the streets seem less merry and less inclined for play than they are in any other place we have visited. The people however are highly intelligent, and they have long and deservedly borne that character. It was well for the place, however, that in the evil days of the persecution the curate of the church (Kirkwood by name) is reported to have been a particularly humane man, and shielded, as far as he could, the poor wanderers from those who sought their lives; so that, though large numbers of them frequented the district, the blood of none of the Covenanters was shed in the burgh. It was in the neighbourhood of Sanquhar that Alexander Peden experienced some of his most remarkable deliverances; as told by the Rev. Dr. Simpson in his "Traditions of the Covenanters," and other interesting works in connection with these days of darkness and blood. Dr. Simpson laboured long in Sanquhar, and after he fell asleep his devoted people erected a fine monument to his memory in front of the church in which he had laboured so long, so faithfully, and so acceptably.

Although the strict Covenanters (such as the Reformed Presbyterians and Original Seceders) have no place of worship here, yet the people as a whole are still largely imbued with the spirit of these noble men of old who stood for and defended our country's truest

and best liberties as bravely, and ultimately as triumphantly, as ever

. . . “Horatius kept the bridge,
In the brave days of old.”





CHAPTER X.

THE IRVINE WATER MARTYR MEMORIALS.

"When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What mean these stones?' then ye shall let your children know."—JOSHUA iv. 21, 22.

"Ye who rejoice, in these fair days of peace,
And, weekly, list the chime of Sabbath bells
Luring you sweetly to the house of God,
Think what your pious fathers, strong in faith,
Had been content to barter for such times!
The lone hill-shepherd leans upon his staff,
And to the listening wanderer tells the tale
Of those who went to worship, long ago,
On the bleak waste, or on the verdant mead;
Who braved all dangers, suffered daily wrong,
Confronted death with calm undaunted look,
Bidding defiance to the wrath of men,
And sealed their testimony with their blood."

THE HILL-PREACHER.



YRSHIRE, and the valley of the Irvine particularly, was very early noted for being the home of the most enlightened men who took part in the Reformation from Popery, and, in after times, for the firm and noble stand which they made against the arbitrary rule of the odious Stuarts. In this later struggle—like the Scotch people generally—they were neither averse to monarchy as such, nor at all unfriendly to the royal race personally, but they were

determined to yield allegiance to them only as constitutional sovereigns, and under a covenant contract. Although many suppose the contrary, and much has been written in contradiction of it, the Covenanters were the true constitutionalists of the seventeenth century. The painstaking and impartial historian, Guizot, was plainly of this opinion, always speaking of the Presbyterians of the times of the Stuarts as the "Constitutionalists;" and the impartial student of history will have no difficulty in arriving at the same conclusion, for he will find that they succeeded in checking the usurpations of the Stuarts until Oliver Cromwell came upon the scene, and for a while thwarted their constitutional designs. Of this Protector, or usurper, as some may think, too much has been made in modern times, mainly owing to the unlimited eulogy of Thomas Carlyle. Cromwell, doubtless, helped to "smash up" the tyrannical Stuarts for a time, and was mainly instrumental in bringing the elder Charles to the scaffold; but he was no less the enemy of the Covenanters, and few will forgive him for bringing the learned, pious, and eloquent Christopher Love of London to the scaffold, because, after having solemnly sworn the Covenant, he did his best to maintain the principles, and bring about the ends thereof. His case is thus clearly and convincingly stated by himself in his dying speech on Tower-hill, August 22, 1651—"The

saints were ‘beheaded for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus.’ But here is my disadvantage, men think I suffer not for religion or conscience, but for meddling with State matters. An old trick of the devil to impute the cause of God’s people’s sufferings to intermeddling with State matters. The Jewish rulers put Jeremiah to death upon a civil account, though it was the truth of his prophecy that made them angry; because, as they alleged, he brought in foreign forces to invade them, and did fall away to the Chaldeans. Though the like be laid to my charge, I am as innocent as Jeremiah was, I find the cause of men’s sufferings in Scripture imputed to meddling in State matters. Paul must die, if the people get their will; though he preached Jesus, yet by them he was reckoned a mover of sedition. The same thing is laid to my charge, whereas indeed, it is because I pursue my covenant, and will not prostitute my principles to the lusts of men. On a civil account my life is taken away, yet I prosecuted nothing against the present powers. . . . This I have done, and I stand to avow it, that I prayed the Lord that there might be an agreement between the King and the Scots. And I declare against the commissioners, as they call them, that it was an act of high presumption, and a notorious falsehood in them to say that it was a plot of the Presbyterian party; it was rather the subtlety of a politic party to

raise this calumny to make the Presbyterian party odious, *who are the best ordered men in the world for government.*"

This extract, though it may be considered irrelevant to the subject, lets us see something of the lofty and pure aims of the Presbyterians of those times, and of the unscrupulous, and even blood-thirsty conduct of Cromwell and the Independents, in their endeavours to bring about and accomplish the ends they had in view.

The valley of the Irvine was at a very early date illuminated with the light of the glorious Reformation, as there, about the close of the 15th century, we find such bold and faithful witnesses for the truth as Campbell of Cessnock and Campbell of Newmilns, who with their friends, Reid of Barskimming and Isobel Chalmers of Stair, within easy distance, bore a noble testimony for the truth, and contended for the pure and Bible gospel, when most of the land around them was lying in papal darkness. Although the battlefield of Drumclog may be said to lie at the head of the Irvine water, yet from its importance we will leave our notice of it for another and a separate chapter, and proceed briefly to trace the other covenanting memories which lie along the stream and its tributaries.

Although it is not so named, yet, from the length of its course and the volume of water which it draws

into it from the hills, the Glen burn is, and ought to be considered, the true head of the Irvine. Tradition states that several conventicles were held here by the Covenanters; and on its sweet and quiet pastoral banks Robert Pollock lays the scene of his touchingly pathetic tale of "Helen of the Glen," although it is by his great and original poem, "The Course of Time," that he is best known as an author, and it is sure to bear his name and his fame along the stream of time for many ages at the least. Passing the long, dull village of Darvel, the Irvine enters a beautiful valley, through which it flows underneath the broad and lovely woods of Lanfine, on the south, until it reaches the busy and thriving town of Newmilns, about a mile and a half to the west, which is a place of considerable antiquity, having been made a burgh of barony about the close of the 15th century. In the next century it figures not a little in the history of the covenanting struggle, when James Gregg, and after him John Nevay, were its faithful ministers. The latter was one of the four ministers appointed by the General Assembly, in 1647, to revise and correct Rouse's metrical version of the Psalms, of which we are told "he had the last thirty for his share," and the manner in which the work has been performed shows him to have been a man of learning and culture. Both of these ministers were forced to leave the scene of their labours by the edicts of the

evil men of these evil times, Nevay dying in Holland some six years after, about the year 1668.

About half a mile west of the town, and near to where the parish manse now stands, was Hardhill, the residence of that brave soldier and devoted Christian, John Nisbet, who did such good service at Pentland, Drumclog, and Bothwell. After many perils and hairbreadth escapes, he was at last taken prisoner at the farmhouse of Midland, not far from Fenwick, and suffered death at the Grassmarket, Edinburgh, 4th Dec. 1685, when only in the 58th year of his age.

In the village, behind the Loudoun Arms Hotel, still stands a small though strong old castle, now called the Ducat Tower, which in covenanting times was garrisoned by soldiers to overawe the Covenanters of the district, and which in the spring of 1685 was the scene of a sanguinary struggle, consequent on the imprisonment there of the eight men who had been apprehended at Little Blackwood, about two miles north of Galston, as already related by us in a former chapter.

Knowing that they were sure to be put to death, the country people bravely attacked the place, when, after killing two of the soldiers, they succeeded in relieving the prisoners, though one of the assailants, John Law, was also killed at the storming of the tower. In a common garden, on the north side of the street, and nearly opposite the parish church, a

stone has been erected to his memory, with this inscription—

RENEWED IN
1822.

Here LIES JOHN LAW,
Who was shot at NEWMILNS At
The relieving of 8 of Christ's—
Prisoners, Who were taken at A meet^g
For Prayer at Little Blackwood, in the
Parish of KILM^K in April 1685, by CAPT
INGLIS and his PARTY, For Their
Adherence to the Word of GOD
And Scotland's covenanted Work
of Reformation.

Cause I CHRIST'S prisoners relieved,
I of my Life was soon bereaved,
By cruel Enemies with rage
In that Rencounter did engage,
The Martyr's honour and his Crown
Bestow'd on me, O high Renown
That I should not only believe,
But for CHRIST'S cause my life should
give."

Like nearly all the other poetical inscriptions on the martyrs' monuments, the above is only bad doggerel, and it is a remarkable circumstance that a century earlier the ballads of Scotland contain some highly excellent poetry, displaying both genius as well as art, while soon after the covenanting period we find nothing better than the above on any of the martyr's tombs, and yet the common people then could, and did, write very admirable prose.

In the churchyard there are several other monuments to those who fell in those "days of darkness and blood," but as the inscriptions on these are lengthy, and are all couched in much the same language, and make the same reference to the cause for which they all suffered, and as they are all given in other works which are easily obtainable, we think it unnecessary to quote them here.

Newmilns has become memorable in modern times from having been the first charge held by Dr. Norman Macleod, whom when a lad we remember well, and sometimes heard preach and frequently lecture on week nights on geology and other secular subjects. Then, as now, the town was noted for its advanced politicians—the Chartists in it being bold, sanguine, and out-spoken, and the young minister was nothing averse to have a discussion with them as they lounged about the "Boar Braeheads," a favourite resort of the weavers of those times. Although they were not all of this class, not a few of them were also daring atheists; and these the plucky minister delighted to meet and to overthrow in argument, as he could much easier do than convert from their evil and heaven-daring ways. Mr. Macleod (for he received his degree of D.D. long afterwards) was often greatly annoyed by people trespassing upon his glebe lands, and when in pursuit of them he often lost his temper as well as his breath ; although, being a man of powerful frame

and undaunted courage, none ever stood a moment when he made a furious charge upon them, but fled from his presence with all possible speed. He was greatly respected, however, in the place, even by those who disregarded and did not attend his teaching, and who also differed from him altogether in politics ; and this is not to be wondered at, for he had the kindest of hearts and was the friend of all mankind. It was here that he found the materials and the original characters for his imitable tale of “Wee Davie,” and we knew at once the living heroes and heroines of his charming story when we first perused it. It was here also, we do not doubt, in his charming rural manse, and amid the soft and sylvan scenery of “Loudoun’s Bonnie Woods and Braes,” with the pelucid Irvine gliding by—the sweet murmurings of whose gently flowing waters could reach his ear at his open window or door—that his natural poetic taste was nursed ; and as many are acquainted with him as an eloquent preacher, a graceful writer, and a lofty-minded philanthropist, who know nothing of him as a poet, no one, we are sure, will blame us for giving here the following pathetic and beautiful specimen of his poetry. The piece is entitled

A MOTHER’S FUNERAL.

“ Ah, sune ye’ll lay yer mither doon
In her lanely bed and narrow !
But till ye’re sleepin’ by her side,
Ye’ll never meet her marrow.

A father's love is strong and deep,
And ready is a brither's,—
A sister's love is pure and sweet—
But what love's like a mither's?

Ye mauna greet ower muckle, bairns,
As round the fire ye gather,
And see the twa chairs empty then
O' mither and o' faither.

Nor dinna let your hearts be dreich,
When wintry winds are blawin',
And on their graves, wi' angry sough,
The snelly drift is snawin' ;

But think o' blither times gane by,
The mony years o' blessing,
When sorrow passed the door, and nane
Frae 'mang ye a' were missing.

And mind the peacefu' gloamin' hours,
When the outdoor wark was endin',
And after time, when auld grey heads,
Wi' yours in prayer were bendin'.

And think how happy baith are noo,
Aboon a' thocht or tellin';
For they're at hame, and young again,
Within their Father's dwellin'.

Sae, gin ye wish to meet up there,
Yer faither and yer mither,
O love their God, and be gude bairns,
And O ! love anither."

Although Dr. Macleod did not seem to have much that was in direct sympathy with the Covenanters, yet it can hardly be doubted that (though unknown, it may have been, to himself) to the good seed which they had sown in Scotland long before, he was mainly indebted for the full and evangelical gospel which he always so eloquently preached.

The reference to family prayer in the third last stanza of the poem we have just quoted, brings to our mind what is stated near the beginning of his biography (if we remember rightly, for we have not the work at hand when we write) as to the almost entire want of vital religion in the parish when Dr. Macleod came to it. In making this sweeping statement, we feel perfectly sure that his biographer has fallen into a very great mistake, for living as we did then in that locality, though but a lad, we can very well remember that there was hardly a house, in the country districts at least, where the voice of psalms and prayer was not heard, with the reading of the Scriptures, morning and evening, all the week round,—indeed it was the rarest thing to find a farm house where family worship was neglected; while if this could not be observed in the cottages of the labourers in the mornings, it was never neglected at night, and it is impossible to believe that all this was mere formalism, when, as we can well remember, the life and conversation of these men did not belie their profession. We do not doubt but that then, perhaps, family worship was more generally observed among the members of the Secession and Reformed Presbyterian Churches than by those who adhered to the National Church. The Reformed Presbyterians were by no means a small body, and they clung lovingly and faithfully to the principles and practice of the

grand old Covenanters of a former age; while those who belonged to the Secession Church were more numerous, and quite as zealous and God-fearing men. But these were far from being wanting in the National Church also, and it may astonish people to be told that the then sexton and beadle of the Parish—Macpherson by name—was not only mighty in the Scriptures, but even more powerful and eloquent in prayer than the minister himself, and, strange though it may seem, he was often not a little in request at the bedside of the sick. He was “gathered to his fathers,” between thirty and forty years ago, at the great age of four-score and five years, after having been sexton of the parish for fully sixty years, during which period, as we heard him tell the year before his death, he had interred more than twice the number of the whole population of Loudoun parish!

In these times too, a staunch Covenanter, belonging to the Reformed Presbyterian Church, named Patterson, who lived not far from the Manse, on the Galston side of the Irvine, was a sincere and well-informed man of God, and of rapt and wonderful power in wrestling with the Highest in prayer; and he too was frequently taken even to distant parishes to instruct and comfort the dying. Thus we are certain, from our own knowledge, that Loudoun—when Norman Macleod went to the parish—was not sunk to such a state of spiritual declension and deadness as has been repre-

sented by his biographer, neither was he justified in the witticisms in which at times he indulges when referring to the Reformed Presbyterians — the then Covenanters of the district.

Proceeding westward, down the fertile and well-wooded valley of the Irvine, we come in view of Loudoun Castle, a large, palatial-looking edifice, finely embowered among trees, and with a park of great size and beauty stretching out from it on the south. Part of the building is very ancient, to which, however, a considerable addition was made by Sir John Campbell (afterwards the first Earl of Loudoun, and Lord Chancellor of Scotland), fully two hundred and sixty years ago.

The prominent part which this excellent nobleman took in the affairs of his country and of State, during the stirring and stormy times in which he lived, are matters of history; but from everything recorded of him, it is certain that he was as brave on the battle-field as he was wise in council, and zealous for his country's weal and that of the Church of Christ. He was too able and zealous a Covenanter to find any favour with Oliver Cromwell, and so he and his son, Lord Mauchline, were left out of the Protector's "Act of Grace and Pardon" in 1654. Tradition relates that when Cromwell's soldiers marched to Loudoun Castle, Lord Mauchline only was there at the time, and that he fled to the Haghousie farm, half-a-mile to the east,

and with the soldiers in pursuit, he had only managed to disguise himself by putting on a labourer's clothes when the dragoons arrived. To them he was, however, unknown, and in such disguise was unsuspected, and by the ready ingenuity of the farmer's wife he escaped capture, for as the soldiers entered, she gave Lord Mauchline a slap on the back, exclaiming, "Get up, ye lazy loon, and go to your work!" who, thus treated, and driven from the house, was placed beyond any suspicion. In after life he went abroad, and died at Leyden, thirty-two years afterwards. His father, the Lord Chancellor, afterwards submitted to General Monk. At the Restoration he was deprived of his office of Lord Chancellor, and fined £12,000 Scots. He died at Edinburgh on 13th March, 1662, not in 1652, as is erroneously stated by Howie in the "Scots Worthies," and which absurd statement (seeing they all make it plain that he did not die till after the Restoration of Charles II., in 1660) has been followed by both M'Gavin and the later Carslaw in their editions of that work.

Hardly a mile to the west of the castle is Loudoun Kirk. A quiet, sweet spot, it used to be, when our eye alighted on it first, and before the near approach to it of grim, smoky coalpits, with the clank of machinery which now jars upon the ear, and accords ill with the brooks which come singing in upon it from the uplands, and the murmur of the Irvine gliding

by, only a little way to the south, and filling the valley with its unceasing music, even in winter, when its swollen and turbid waters go rushing along in haste to join the all-absorbing sea. The church which used to be here in ages past, and which was first founded by the lady of Sir John Campbell, of Loudoun, in 1451, has long since disappeared, save some roofless, crumbling walls, and "the auld Queir," as the small, though high tower is named, which has long been the burial place of the noble family of Loudoun. The door is strong, and is seldom if ever opened save to receive one of the family whose life on earth is over. There are, however, small, narrow openings in the wall, through which, when a boy, we frequently peered into the darkness with palpitating heart, and could dimly see the coffins ranged round the walls. Here it is that the remains of the good Lord Chancellor were laid to rest, he having only escaped the scaffold in that evil time,—to which his friend, the great Marquis of Argyle was then brought,—by dying of a broken heart for his country's wrongs. Close friends they had been in life, and in death they were but little divided, and although Argyle appears more prominently upon the stage of passing events, it is doubtful if the Earl of Loudoun was not the greatest man of the two; more eloquent, more far-seeing, and calmer and more persuasive in council.

Lord Chancellor Loudoun's, however, was not the

only broken heart which, after “life’s fitful fever,” has been laid to rest in this old “ivy-mantled tower.” Scotland has not yet forgotten the wrongs and the cruel fate of the lofty and pure-minded Lady Flora Hastings, whose sad history and death we can do little more than allude to here. Gifted and good, and full of poetic fervour, she had early, and all throughout her brief life, courted the Muse; although it was not till after her melancholy death that the world knew anything of her devotion to poetry. Soon after, however, a volume of her poems was published under the editorial care of her sister, then Lady Sophia Hastings, afterwards Marchioness of Bute, and mother of the present Marquis. In one of these, “Farewell, My Home,” we see how her sympathies were with the Covenanters, from whom she was descended. Thus, she says:—

“ And there was yet an hour more deeply fraught
With fervid feeling. On thy storm-riven crest *
Stood they who turn’d the sickle to a sword,
And grasp’d, with hands to pastoral toils inured,
Th’ unwonted weapon, in the holiest cause
For which man hath stood forth a combatant—
The cause of conscience and of liberty.
Smile not, O sons of these pacific times !
When, free to worship even as ye list,
Ye think upon the motley mustering
Of those who for the holy Covenant,
The Church by Scotland sanction’d and approved,
Even from this rock descending, with one voice
Raised to the Lord of Armies one loud psalm,
And on the purple heather of Drumclog
Pour’d forth their blood, to seal their faith thereby.”

* Loudoun Hill.

Although then but a lad, yet living in the near neighbourhood of Loudoun Castle, and having on one or two occasions seen Lady Flora, whom we thought—and still think was the most truly noble and intellectual looking lady we had ever set eyes upon, the painful story of her wrongs and of her premature death made a great and sorrowful impression upon our young heart, and not very long after we bewailed her lot in a youthful and very immature volume of verse, which was not published till seven years after Lady Flora's death. Before quoting a few lines from the tribute we there pay to her memory, we cannot refrain from giving here this finely gifted lady's last lines, written when the hand of death was upon her. They are not included in the published volume of her poems, but they were, we are fully assured, found among her papers after her pure spirit had winged its way to its Almighty source. They are entitled

LADY FLORA HASTINGS' REQUEST.

“ Oh, let the kindred circle,
Far in our northern land,
From heart to heart draw closer
Affection's strengthening hand ;
To fill my place long vacant,
Soon may our loved ones learn ;
For to our pleasant dwelling
I never shall return.

Peace to each heart that troubled
My course of happy years ;
Peace to each angry spirit
That quench'd my life in tears ;

Let not the thought of vengeance
Be mingled with regret ;
Forgive my wrongs, dear mother !
Seek even to forget.

Give to the friend—the stranger,
Whatever once was mine,
Nor keep the smallest token
To wake fresh tears of thine—
Save one, one loved memorial,
With thee I fain would leave ;
'Tis one that will not teach thee
Yet more for me to grieve.

'Twas mine when early childhood
Turn'd to its sacred page,
The gay, the thoughtless glances
Of almost infant age ;
'Twas mine through days yet brighter,
The joyous years of youth,
When never had affliction
Bow'd down mine ear to truth.

'Twas mine when deep devotion
Hung breathless on each line
Of pardon, peace, and promise
Till I could call them mine ;
Till o'er my soul's awakening
The gift of heavenly love,
The spirit of adoption
Descended from above.

Unmark'd, unhelped, unheeded,
In heart I've walk'd alone ;
Unknown the prayers I've utter'd—
The hopes I held unknown ;
Till in the hour of trial,
Upon the mighty strain,
With strength and succour laden,
To bear the weight of pain.

Then, oh ! I fain would leave thee,
For now my hours are few,

The hidden mine of treasure,
 Whence all my strength I drew.
 Take then, the gift, my mother,
 And till thy path is trod,
 Thy child's last token cherish—
 It is the Book of God."

The mother to whom these touching verses were addressed only survived her daughter six months, she too following her to "the silent land" with a broken heart.

It was when thinking on these sad and sorrowful events, that we thus apostrophised the place where the daughter and mother lie sleeping the sleep of death, and the castle in which they had lived:—

" Ye lofty trees that here in beauty bloom,
 Your dewy branches bend above the tomb ;
 From every leaf let fall a glittering tear
 In sorrow for the maiden sleeping here ;
 Well may ye bow your heads, ye little flowers !
 Well may ye lonely look, ye lordly towers !
 Because your beauty and your boast is gone,
 No lovlier maiden e'er within you shone.
 No more her harp shall thro' the wild wood ring,
 Nor her fair fingers touch the trembling string ;
 Then let your woods send forth a mournful strain,
 And your fair flowrets weep upon the plain,
 Let each thing round be cloth'd in doleful hue,
 And mourn for her whom basest slanders slew."

A little way to the east of the vault of the Loudoun family stands a small stone to the memory of one of the Covenanting worthies who fought and fell at Drumclog. Although otherwise it is but a plain stone, at the top it has the form of a crown, and underneath is the following inscription—

HERE LIES
THOMAS FLEMMING OF
LOUDON HILL.
Who for His appearing in ARMS
In his Own Defence & in Defence
OF THE GOSPEL.
According to the Obligations of
Our National Covenants And
Agreeable to the Word
of GOD [clog
Was Shot in a Rencounter at Drum
June 1st 1679 by bloody GRAHAM
of Claverhouse.

It is a pity that the churchyard is not better kept, and enclosed, for it is a place of almost surpassing natural beauty, with the small hamlet of Loudoun Kirk close by, and, till recently, an ancient looking cornmill at only a little distance. It is still occasionally used as a place of interment, but it contains no monument of any pretensions. When last there, however, we discovered and felt not a little interested in a plain headstone on which the following impressive lines have been carved—

“ Time was, I was as thou art now,
Looked o'er the dead as thou dost me ;
Ere long thou'l lie as low as I,
And others stand and look o'er thee.”

Galston, Burn Ann, or Burnawn, as it is now named, —a tributary of the Irvine—and the lower district of the valley, we must reserve for another chapter.



CHAPTER XI.

GALSTON AND BURNAWN.

Hush ! this is holy ground :
Thou who this very day hast prayed,
Thy children kneeling all around,
None making thee afraid,
Muse on the time when praise and prayer
Ascended through the midnight air,
Only from lips and hearts nerfed high,
To glorify their God and die !

This is a martyr's grave
And surely here the dews are given
In richer showers, and wild flowers wave
More in the smile of heaven !
And something in the stirring air
Tells us that angel wings are there,
And angel watchers keep the space,
To be their own sweet resting place !—

MRS. STUART MENTEATH.



HE thriving, busy, and pretty little town of Galston, situated on the south bank of the Irvine, at the confluence with it of the Burn Ann—or Burnawn, as it is now named,—is a place of unknown antiquity. There, in 1307, lay Bruce with his army, before encountering and defeating the English under Sir Amyr de Valence, near to Loudoun Hill, though still within the boundaries of Galston parish. Near to this place, in 1831—where long before the Roman

flag had been unfurled—a silver coin was found in good preservation, with this inscription; CÆSAR AVGVSTVS DIVI F. PATER PATRIÆ; and it, with several other coins of the reigns of Alexander, David, and Edward,—also discovered in the parish—are in possession of the Brown family, of Lanfine.

In times less remote, and even more momentous,—the Reformation and Covenanting struggles,—Galston played no unimportant part through her chiefs, Lockhart of Barr, Campbell of Cessnock, Schaw of Sorngbeg, and others. For several centuries the Cessnock family especially were noted as bold and ready defenders of civil and religious liberty. When, in 1494, thirty persons, called the Lollards of Kyle, were accused of heresy by the Archbishop of Glasgow, and called to answer for the same before the King and his council, the name of Campbell of Cessnock appears among them, who, it is said, was the readiest with his answers to the accusations brought against them, which were as follows:—“That they objected to the worship of images and reliques; that they asserted that Christ gave power to Peter and to the other apostles, but not to the Pope; that they denied transubstantiation, or that the bread and wine were turned into the actual body and blood of Christ; that they declare that the Pope is not the successor of Peter, except wherein Christ said, ‘Go behind me, Satan;’ that the Pope deceives the people

by his bulls and indulgences ; that the mass profiteth not the souls that are said to be in purgatory ; that the Pope exalts himself against God, and above God ; that the Pope cannot remit the pains of purgatory ; that the priests may have wives ; that the Pope forgives not sins, but God," etc. This good King—James the Fourth—being inclined to favour the accused, they were dismissed with an admonition to beware of new doctrines, and to be contented with what the Church believed.

Barr Castle, where Lockhart, the friend of Knox dwelt, and where the great reformer visited and preached in the beginning of the year 1556, stands at the southern end of the town, and, though long since tenantless, is still in a good state of preservation, with high walls of great thickness and strength. Hugh Brown, after referring to its earlier history, thus alludes to John Knox preaching in this old baronial tower :—

“ But with the tide of change, there came
Another sound, another name
That made even monarchs bow :
No soldier's steel begirt his breast,
No waving plume or helmed crest,
Was on his fearless brow.

The burning eloquence that rolled,
Like thunder on the mountain wold,
In Mercy's hallowed home,
Awoke strange echoes as it rung,
Where nought but deeds of blood were sung,
Beneath thy time-worn dome.

Thy stormy periods of the past,—
The trumpet's voice, the clarion's blast,
 Thy proud baronial power,
Thy thousand flashing sheathless swords,
Are nothing, when a Knox's words
 Have hallowed thee, lone tower ! ”

In 1638, and about that time, all parties almost in the parish seem, from the session records, to have subscribed the Covenant; and there is in the session books of the year 1640 a beautifully written copy of the National Covenant, as originally signed in the Greyfriars Church, Edinburgh, on 1st March, 1638, of which the renowned Alexander Henderson said : “This was the day of ‘the Lord’s power, in which multitudes offered themselves most willingly, like the dewdrops of the morning,—this was, indeed, the great day of Israel, wherein the arm of the Lord was revealed—the day of the Redeemer’s strength, on which the princes of the people assembled to swear their allegiance to the King of kings.”

At this time the Rev. Alexander Wallace was the minister of Galston, and the Covenant was subscribed by him. Evidently he was a man of more scholarly tastes than most country ministers of the period, for he gave a sum of money towards the erecting of a library for the University of Glasgow. He came to Galston as its minister in the year 1592, in which year was passed the Act establishing Presbytery in Scotland, and which is known in history as “the great Charter of the Church of Scotland.” In 1603

the Union of the Crowns of Scotland and England took place. In 1611 the authorised version of the Bible was given to the world. In 1638 was held, at Glasgow, the most notable of all the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland; so that his time was one of great events both in Church and State. He died in 1643, having been minister of the parish for the long period of fifty-one years. His successor, the Rev. Alexander Blair, A.M., suffered many things for his faithfulness to the Covenanted work of Reformation, notwithstanding that he was, for a time, one of those "indulged by the Privy Council." In 1673 he was accused of not keeping the day of the King's Restoration; but not having received their instructions, a copy was handed to him, when he nobly and bravely replied,— "My Lord Chancellor, I cannot be so uncivil as to refuse a paper offered me by your Lordship, but I can receive no instructions from you for regulating the exercise of my ministry; for, if I should receive instructions from you, I should be your ambassador, not Christ's." For this he was cast into prison, where, from the severe treatment he received, he was seized with a dangerous illness, when, on caution that he would enter in a month, and not keep conventicles, he was allowed to go to a private house in the city, where, in less than two months, he died in the fifty-sixth year of his age, and the thirty-first of his ministry.

Following Mr. Blair was the Rev. Adam Alasoune, who only lived till 1680, when, in the fiercest period of the persecution, the Rev. Robert Sympson, a native of Aberdeen, which then gave to the south and west so many unpopular and ignorant curates, became the incumbent of the parish. He had prosecuted some of his parishioners for not attending his ministry—if such it could be called; when soon after the Revolution, in January or February, 1689,—as we are informed by the Rev. John Brown, B.D., the present minister of the parish, in his exceedingly interesting lecture on “Clerical Life in Galston,” and quoting from Dr. Hew Scott’s *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanae*,—some of the relatives of the persecuted took him out of his house, and, after talking with him about an hour, he being uncovered, put him through the water of Irvine out of the parish. He retired to Edinburgh, and died 27th April 1710, aged about 60. Mr. Brown’s own remarks on this extraordinary episode, in the history of the closing period of “the killing times” in Galston, are well worth quoting. “It is an extraordinary story,” he says, “but it gives us a wondrous insight into the history of the time; or, rather, if we read it in the light of the history of that day, we readily find an explanation of this unusual occurrence. It happened just at the time when that event took place which is known in Scotch Church History as the “Rabbling of the Curates.” Sympson came to the parish from

the far north, from Aberdeen. The proverb, "Far away fowls have fair feathers," evidently did not apply to him. He may have been one of the unpopular curates that were thrust into vacant charges when Episcopacy was for the time established; although the fact that he had graduated A.M. at King's College, Aberdeen, would seem to show that he was not one of the raw illiterate youths. But, at any rate, he came to the parish in 1684—that was just about the beginning of the period which is known as "the killing times." He took things easy, we may be sure. He sided with the Government, and conformed to the party that was in power. He was, in short, a kind of "Vicar of Bray" in Galston. There was no danger of his being molested during "the killing times." But the people, who were strongly attached to the Covenant, would not come to hear him. They preferred to worship in conventicles; they would have none of his ministrations. He found fault with them for not coming to hear him (a difficult and a somewhat dangerous thing for a minister to do even in happier times), but it was now the year 1689. William of Orange had landed. The Revolution had been virtually accomplished. The House of Stuart had been overthrown. The Kirk of Scotland was on the eve of being established on a strong basis. The people, consequently, were emboldened. During the "killing times" they had had, no doubt, but a poor opinion of

the minister, who drew his stipend and preached his sermons to a handful of people. But they had just to content themselves with the expression of that opinion in a quiet way. But now things were changed. The struggle of the Covenant was virtually successful, and was on the point of being confirmed. The minister finds fault with some people for not coming to hear him. ‘You find fault with us for not coming to hear you,’ they say. ‘We shall show you, sir, what we think of you, and how we appreciate your ministrations.’ And so they took him, drew him through the Irvine, and sent him about his business! Never more did Robert Sympson appear in Galston, and long after, more than twenty years after this inglorious termination of his ministry at Galston, he ended his days in Edinburgh.”

In a parish where not only every person had subscribed the Covenant, but where, when their much-loved minister, Alexander Blair, was cast into prison for “taking his instructions” from Christ rather than the Lord Chancellor, his session arranged that the elders, or other “honest men should go and visit him in prison two and two, week about,” it was not to be expected but that others, besides the minister of the place, would have to endure persecution and suffer for casting in their lot with the Covenanters, and faithfully following the Lord. That such was the case both tradition and the martyrs’ stones stand-

ing in the churchyard (and which used to be seen elsewhere also in the parish) fully testify. In the south-side of the churchyard there is to be seen a small stone on which an open Bible has been carved, with Rev. xii. xi. on it. It is doubtless the 11th verse of the 12th chapter of that book which is meant—“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.” There has also been indifferently carved thereon a man at whom a soldier is taking aim with a gun, underneath which is this inscription:—

HERE LIES ANDREW RICHMOND
Who was killed by bloody GRAHAM of
Claver-House
June . 1679.

For his Adherence to the WORD of GOD &
Scotland's Covenanted Work of *Reformation*

When bloody Tyrants here did rage
Over the *LORD'S OWN* Heritage
To persecute His noble Cause
By Mischief Framed into Laws
Cause I the Gospel did defend
By Martyrdom my life did end.

This stone, as is stated thereon, was renewed in 1823, and there has also been cut on it the likeness of a flag, with this inscription on the face of it—“For God and State, Kirk and Covenants, and the work of Reformation. Galston. GOD IS EVER THE SAME.”

At some distance from this stone is another, on which we can read as follows:—

IN MEMORY

of

JOHN RICHMOND

Younger of Knowe

Who was executed at the Cross of Glasgow
March 19th 1684, and interred in
The High Church yard there.

AND

JAMES SMITH.

East Threepwood

Who was Shot near Bank of Burn Ann.
By CAPTAIN INGLIS and his dragoons
And buried there.

ALSO

JAMES YOUNG & GEORGE CAMPBELL
Who were banished in 1679.

AND THE

REV. ALEXANDER BLAIR

Who Suffered Imprisonment 1673.

This is all the original inscription, a modern one on the other side, being less to the point, we do not inflict it upon our readers.

Most writers state that the farm of Knowe, to which John Richmond belonged, and we believe Andrew Richmond also, lies between Galston and Hurlford. This, however, is quite a mistake, for the farm lies miles away on the other side of Galston altogether, and pretty well up on the hillside skirting the moors, which stretch deep and far away into the wild moorland wilderness to the south and east.

East Threepwood lies about two miles south of the town of Galston, and a little way to the west of the pure, gushing, Burn Ann. This stream has long been noted for its precious stones, particularly its jaspers. The two recent Galston poets—John Wright and Hugh Brown,—were often to be found alone, in musing mood, pacing its quiet, green, and bowery banks, where it brawls on for evermore, far below the now almost deserted battlements of Cessnock Castle, the glory of which has long since departed, though nature has made the place one of great and abiding beauty. Beyond the castle, to the south, the scene, though finely wooded for a while, becomes wilder and more solitary as the stream gradually lessens to a brook, and has its rise in the marshy moor which is seldom visited or seen by any but the few and thinly scattered dwellers there. The greatly gifted but imprudent, and therefore unfortunate, John Wright, thus sings of its beauties and its charms—

“ Clear, wild romantic rill ! at sound of thee
 How thrilled affection thro’ every vein !
 A lovelier fountain search were vain to see ;
 From hills so rich, ne’er leaped into the main
 Thy likeness yet, nor rolled thro’ wealthier plain.
 The genius of thy waters is the maid
 That moistened Eden—and, unhurt here reign
 Peace, love, primeval purity arrayed
 In garb that peccancy to stain yet never strayed.

Roll on, sweet streamlet ! in thy fairy dream ;—
 Bright are thy banks with verdure and thy bowers
 With bloom and melody—the beauteous gleam
 Thou wearest, on thy wave and in thy flowers,

That led us to thee in our buoyant hours
Of blissful childhood, when the heart ran o'er,
And lip and eye spoke love. Oh ! ye blest powers
That here preside, waft back to his loved shore,
And these dear haunts, the form so fitted to adore ! ”

We, too, have felt the inspiration of this sweet dell, with its unpolluted stream, its hazelly banks, its bed gemmed with jaspers, and shining with purest pebbles; with its green fields sloping down to its banks, and the round little hills rising away beyond, where in the glad bright days of spring the song of the lark mingles so sweetly with the matchless music of the purling brook ; for several years of our boyhood were spent within sight of its upper course, and within hearing of its sweet murmurings, or of its *eerie*, solemn rush when the thunderclouds poured out their contents upon the hills, and turned the rivulet into a foaming impetuous river. Here, from a father's lips, and leaning upon the lap of the best of Christian mothers, we learned the story of the Covenant ; and here with them we sang the morning and the evening Psalm “to the God of Salvation.” In more, almost, than fancy, we hear their voices still ! though long years now have passed away since then, and since their lips ceased to quiver with these songs of praise on earth But their influence over us, with that exerted by the surrounding scene, is unforgotten, and can never depart.

Bank, where James Smith was so cruelly shot by

Captain Inglis (tradition says he was hewed down by the swords of the troopers after one had stolen behind him and thrown a cloak over his head, and thus blindfolded him, while he was defending himself with great dexterity from the attacks of others), is only about half a mile down the stream, and on the opposite bank from Threepwood. When we lived there, it was a pleasant little farm steading; but the rage now for "gentlemen farmers," and for large farms, has blotted it out from the number of holdings altogether; and the houses, which soon became hovels for the poorer class of labourers, have now altogether disappeared. East Threepwood is fast being driven down the same road to ruin. It has now, and since we remember, been laid into another farm, and the houses are becoming ruinous; and there also the hearth will soon be forsaken and cold! When we see the country thus becoming depopulated (for the parish in which we now live contains nearly forty fewer farms than it did when we came to it first, and it is the same everywhere), we cannot help taking up the cry of the prophet, and saying, "Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!"

The Martyr of Threepwood was buried where he fell, which is said to have been near to the farmhouse of Bank; and it is said, too, that a flat stone

with an inscription was placed above his dust. If this was the case, which is highly probable, it had either decayed or sunk into the earth before our day, for though we have wandered waist-deep among the yellow whins and broom which were said to grow around his grave, we were never able to come upon the stone. But though now unknown to men on earth, the grave is not forgotten by God, to whom the very dust of his saints is dear; and who can doubt but that it is also well-known to those holy and angelic watchers, who are the willing and unwearyed servants of the Most High—

“ But morn shall dawn and the martyr then
Shall not forgotten lie,
When the ocean and the earth give up
The treasures of the sky.”





CHAPTER XII.

IRVINE.

O, Scotland ! Scotland, it's wae to thee,
When thy Hechts are ta'en awa',
And it's wae, it's wae to a sinfu' lan',
When the righteous sae maun fa'.

It was a halie Covenant aith
We made wi' our God to keep ;
And it's for the halie Covenant vow,
That we maun sit and weep.

O, wha will gang to yon hill-side,
To sing the psalm at e'en ?
And wha will speak o' the love o' our God ?
For the Covenant reft hath been." — ROBERT ALLAN.



RVINE, like almost every other town and village in the west of Scotland, has its martyr-memories. Being a seaport, and a place of great antiquity, it had risen into considerable importance long before the Covenanting struggle began ; and as Roman weapons of war, and other vestiges of their presence have been found near to the town, and as one of their ancient causeways has been traced at some places on the banks of the Irvine river, the town may either have been in existence when the Romans held the country, or have been founded by

that wonderful people. Chalmers believed it to be the most ancient town in Ayrshire, and says regarding it:—"It is certain that the town of Irvine, and the castle, under the protection of which it arose, were in existence before the castle and the shire-town of *Ayr* were founded. Hoveden refers to *the castle of Irwin*, in Cunningham, as a place of note in 1184." In old charters, its name is variously spelled *Irwin*, *Ervin*, *Yrewin*, which Chalmers considers a corruption of the Celtic, *Ir-Avon*, which signifies, *the clear river*, and which is generally a characteristic of the Irvine stream throughout its whole course.

The Church of Irvine is first found mentioned in the chartulary of Paisley, in the year 1233, as belonging to the Abbey of Kilwinning, when a dispute arose between the Abbot of that place and the monks of Paisley, when the examination of witnesses in reference to the matter took place in the Church of "Yrewin," before the deacons of Carrick and Cunningham and the schoolmaster of *Ayr*.

Before the Reformation, Chalmers says, "there was at Irvine a chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary, which stood on the bank of the river, near to the parish church."

Of all places in Scotland, Irvine excelled as one where witches were supposed to abound, and executions for witchcraft were terribly frequent,—one is perfectly appalled now to read that on one occasion,

in March 1650, no fewer than twelve persons were executed at one time for witchcraft, and four others only a short time after! The Presbytery appears to have been particularly zealous in this matter, as is to be seen from an examination of the minutes of the Presbytery at that period, and a curious work entitled “Satan’s Invisible World Discovered,” by Mr. George Sinclair, Professor of Philosophy in the College of Glasgow. One is surprised to find such a man as the good and learned William Guthrie, of Fenwick, with the two ministers of Stewarton, appointed to “deal with some persons within the Parish of Dreghorn, apprehended for the sin of witchcraft, both upon presumptions and delations, for bringing them to ane confession,” and how the Presbytery, “16th June 1650, having heard the confession of Jean Hamilton, Isobel Hutchison, Marian Boyd, of Agnes Dunlop, and Jean Swan in Irvine, of witchcraft, how that they had renounced their baptism, taken a new name from the devil, etc., being read, are found to be clear, to be recommended to the Committee of Estates for a Commission,” to try the parties. So late as 19th July, 1698, there is this entry in the minutes of the Presbytery—“The Presbytery appoint Mr. Patrick Warner, their Commissioner, to attend with other ministers, the meeting of Parliament, for prosecuting the recommendations of the General Assembly against popery and witchcraft!” Superstition, however, dies

hard, even in an age of good men; for down till the year 1735, when the last instance occurs, we find several cases where parties were brought before the Presbytery for consulting spaewives for the purpose of recovering stolen goods! It would almost seem that, in some respects, Satan has long had one of his synagogues in Irvine, and that the words of the prophet Isaiah might, till recent times, have been taken up against the people of that place and neighbourhood:—“And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God?” For within the memory of many still living, one of these deceivers, Jenny Hooks by name, had her abode in Irvine. Her fame was widespread, and to her not a few fairly well-informed people, and even some professing Christians and church members, went for counsel, and the impostor drove a lucrative trade by her soothsaying.

Mr. David Dickson, the celebrated Presbyterian minister, (who was largely instrumental in bringing in the second Reformation in Scotland) was for a length of time the minister of Irvine, and in the short campaign of 1639 he acted as chaplain to the regiment of Ayrshire men commanded by the good and great Earl of Loudoun, and, both before and after, he suffered much for the testimony he bore to the truth. It was he who prevailed upon the Presby-

tery of Irvine to apply, in 1637, for the suspension of the obnoxious Service Book. In 1640 he was appointed to the Professorship of Divinity in the University of Glasgow, and ten years after he was removed to that of Edinburgh, dying in 1663, after having been ejected from his chair for declining to take the oath of supremacy at the Restoration in 1660.

It is worthy of remark that Mr. Dickson had left Irvine before the flagrant trials and the horrible executions for witchcraft took place. Mr. Dickson was a learned divine as well as an eloquent preacher. He was moreover a poet, and the lengthy and still popular poem, beginning—"O, mother dear, Jerusalem," is with good reason attributed to him, although it is little more than a rough and free translation of that famous Latin hymn of the twelfth century—the *Hora Novissima*—of Bernard of Cluny, which has now become so widely known to English readers through the finely polished and spirited translation of the Rev. J. M. Neale, D.D.

As the years sped on, and the times became worse, two martyrs of the Covenant who had been taken prisoners at the battle of Pentland were executed at Irvine. Their names are James Blackwood and John M'Coul, and it seems somewhat surprising that they should have taken up arms and joined the Covenanters if they were quite as ignorant as the garrulous Wod-

row would have us believe, who, says that, "When Mr. Alexander Nisbet, minister of Irvine, visited them in prison, he found them ignorant and very much disengaged and damped with the near views of death and eternity. After he had bestowed some pains upon them in the way of salvation by faith in Christ, when the day of execution came they died full of joy and courage, to the admiration of all who were witnesses."

They had been tried and condemned at Ayr and brought to Irvine for execution, as likely to overawe the people there, just as two others, condemned at the same time, were taken to Dumfries for execution; for from the 7th of December in that year (1666), to the 2nd of January following, no fewer than thirty-four Covenanters were publicly executed!

The public executioner at Irvine then was William Sutherland, a native of the Highlands, a man of so little education that he could read the Bible with difficulty. Having, however, heard that those condemned at Ayr were godly men, he determined to have no hand in their execution. He was, however, brought by force to Ayr, and taken before the Provost, but he resisted all promises and bribes to act as their executioner, and was therefore sent to prison. He was threatened with the torture of the boots, and others more horrible still, but he remained unmoved. The Provost then offered him fifty dollars to do his work,

promising to let him then return to the Highlands, but it was of no use,—he still remained firm. They then put him in the stocks, and brought four soldiers to shoot him ; but even this could not make him comply, while his answers to the Provost, Lord Kelly, and the Curate, surprised them as much as his firmness. Lord Eglinton, who was next sent for, had no better success than the rest ; and at last they let him go. One Cornelius Anderson, a recreant Covenanter, who had been taken prisoner along with them at Pentland, being offered his life if he would hang the others, performed the awful work, but if the gossiping pedlar, Patrick Walker, is to be believed, he was unhappy ever after, and came to a miserable end. “His conscience troubling him,” says Walker, “he went to Ireland, where he was no better ; nobody would either give him work or lodgings. He built a little house in some common place near Dublin, where he, and it, and all were burnt to ashes !”

A monument to the two martyrs is to be found in Irvine Churchyard. There can be no doubt but that the present stone has taken the place of an older one, on which was the first part of the inscription, which must have been exactly copied, for had this not been the case, and the inscription been modern, and composed so recently as 1823, it would have been punctuated in some way, and some blemishes of expression would also have been omitted.

The monument is a flat stone of considerable size, and on it is the following inscription—

STOP PASSENGER
THOU TREADEST NEAR TWO MARTYRS
JAMES BLACKWOOD & JOHN M'COUL
who suffered at IRVINE
on the 31st of December 1666
REV xii. 11th

These honest Country-men whose Bones here lie
A Victim fell to Prelates Cruelty ;
Condemn'd by bloody and unrighteous Laws
They died Martyrs for the good old cause
Which Balaams wicked Race in vain assail
For no Inchantments 'gainst Israel prevail
Life and this evil World they did contemn
And dy'd for Christ who died first for them

'They lived unknown
Till Persecution dragged them into fame
And chas'd them up to Heaven.'
Erected by Friends to Religious Liberty
31st Dec. 1823.

In 1678, the "Highland Host" was poured into the West Country, to the terror and great distress of the people there, their exactions upon the town of Irvine being very grievous, and in the records of the Burgh we find several entries relating to such matters. Thus in 1678, a large meeting of the inhabitants was held in the church to act in the town's affairs, when it was stated that, "Mathew Gray and Robert Dickie, tenants of the Burgh, have not got allowance of their disbursements anent the Hielandmen and sojurs, but ordained to be allowed them as other noblemen and

gentlemen allow their tenants." In 1680, there is also this entry, "Provost Boyle ordered by the Council to ride over to Ayr with the first convenience, and do his utmost to remove the quartering (of the military) that is presently on the burgh." In April 1687, we find it stated that, "Major-general Graham of Claverhouse, his troops, hath been quartered upon this burgh for some time back, and therefore order to quarter upon the late magistrates, and to poind for quartering money if necessary."

Fully a century ago a most blasphemous sect sprang up in Irvine, under an illiterate but cunning and insinuating woman—a Mrs. Buchan—who gained over to her delusions a vain, shallow minister of the Relief Church, named White. Among her other converts, were some influential people of the town, but they were all soon driven therefrom by the inhabitants, who had become disgusted at their ravings, and too evidently immoral lives, though they went about singing hymns, and saying that they were all about to be translated to the New Jerusalem without tasting death! The fanatics, to the number of forty, ultimately settled at a place called New Cample, near Closeburn in Dumfriesshire, where "Lucky Buchan," as she was called, died, not without well-grounded suspicions of having been poisoned by Mr. White the minister. The last of the "Buchanites," named Andrew Innes, died quite recently, clinging to these

dreadful errors to the last, and desiring to be buried in the same grave with the bones of “Lucky Buchan!”

Irvine is prettily situated close to the sea, with the river of the same name coming into it from the east. It has a richly cultivated and finely rolling country behind, and the broad blue Firth of Clyde to the west, with the lofty peaks of Arran rising high above the dancing, gleaming waves. It is now a thriving place, with a good trade and a busy port, (though twenty years ago it was an old-fashioned burgh), and in the hurry and bustle of commerce its connection with covenanting times may be but little remembered by the people who now inhabit it; but, from the circumstances we have narrated, it will always occupy a place in the history of the covenanting struggle, which, in the end, became one of the crowning glories of Scotland.





CHAPTER XIII.

LOCHGOIN.

But wide the landscape's wondrous stretch,
What eye can scan, what hand may sketch,
From lofty Arran's high peak'd brow,
To where Kintyre shuts up the view ;
From Carlisle, with its fruitful gills,
And Lesmahagow's weeping rills,
In fancy's ear that murmur still
The wrongs of Cameron and Cargill,
And Shields, and Renwick, young and good,
The last who nobly shed his blood,
Firm and consistent to the death,
For Scotland's Covenanted faith ;
And by you dark and narrow stripe,
The rugged ridge of barren Kype,
To lofty Loudoun o'er his bog,
Still smiling proudly on Drunclog ;
Where Claver'se, in his mad career
Of ruthless murder, learnt to fear
A bold, though simple peasantry,
Who stood for God and Liberty.
By watery wastes, extending far,
From Balangiech round green Dunwar ;
Where haunted Craiburn's head streams twine,
Through the black bogs of lone LOCHGOIN.—JOHN STRUTHERS.



LTHOUGH situated deep in the moors of Fenwick, and far away from the frequented highways where men come and go, still few places are better known by name to Scotchmen than "lone Lochgoin," for around it cluster innumerable and deeply interesting memories of the Covenanting struggle in Scotland, of heroic endurance, unwavering

faith, and of men who, for Christ's cause, "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods," and whose names are still "righteously esteemed on the earth," and whose descendants are still tenants of the lands where their fathers have dwelt for many generations. It is thought that the Howies of Lochgoin came originally from France about the close of the twelfth century, that they were Albigenses, and that they fled from their native Languedoc to escape from the persecution of the Papal power. We have no doubt the tradition regarding their descent is correct, but we are quite of the opinion that the date of the arrival of the three brothers (then called Houy, a name still common in France) in Ayrshire, should be placed nearly half a century later, or when Pope Innocent III., because of the murder of one of his hated legates by the people, on account of his great cruelties, began a bitter persecution against the "heretic" there, in the year 1209. We place little reliance on the dates on the lintel-stone of the old dwelling house at Lochgoin, and which has been built into the present modern dwelling, the earliest being 1178, for this stone has evidently been wrought, and the dates cut upon it long years after. Even if the Howies came from the Vaudois Valleys of Switzerland—as some assert they did—we can find nothing in the state of that country then to have forced them to fly in that year from their native land, save only

that Jean de Belle Main, Archbishop of Lyons, then ordered the Waldensians to refrain from preaching; and that six years later, at the Council of Verona, they were threatened with excommunication by Pope Lucius III., although it was not till nine years after that the Papal threat was put in execution against them. We think it likely, then, that the Howies did not come to this country till some time during the reign of Alexander II., who was a good and a much beloved sovereign. Only one of the three brothers, which tradition tells of, settled at Lochgoine (which is a Celtic name, meaning *the white loch*, not *the loch of the stirks*, as some have asserted), while one is thought to have taken up his abode in the adjacent parish of Mearns, and the third in that of Craigie, some nine miles to the south-west.

Some curiosity has been felt as to whether, during the subsequent years of Papal darkness in Scotland, the Howies again lapsed into the errors of the Romish Church, or if they continued to hold fast the purer faith which they had brought with them from the Continent, and thus continued to be “a light shining in a dark place.” We do not think it at all likely that they would turn back again to and espouse the errors of Popery; for not only was Scotland never at any time long without some noble witnesses for the truth—transmitted from the Culdees to the Lollards, which last were numerous in Ayrshire—but the

pretty general circulation of Wycliffe's Bible in the fourteenth century kept the light of the true faith among the people. Nor were these refugees likely so soon to forget the traditions of their fathers, as to forsake the faith for the holding of which they had been forced to become exiles from their native land.

Paterson, in his "Ayrshire Families," quotes the following as the earliest written notice we have of the Lochgoin Howies. It is from the testament of "Johnne Howie, in Lochgoyne, within the parochin of . . . the tyme of his deceis. Quha deceist in the month of Februar, 1614. The quhilk day, etc., Quharin be nominatis, constituts, etc., Dorathie Gemmill, his wife, and Arthore Howie, his sone, his onlie executouris, etc. To equallie distribute the deid's pairt amangis the said Arthore, William, Stein, Alexander, and Agnes Howie, his bairnes."

The name, John, would appear to have been borne by one in the family in every generation for a very long period, and there is a tradition among them that this name descended from sire to son without a break for twenty-eight generations preceding the persecuting period. This would lead us back to a period long prior to the time when the Howies are said to have arrived in Scotland; and so we may well consider the tradition far from being well authenticated. The Howie to whom Paterson here refers was the great-grandfather of the author of the "Scots Worthies,"

and he again was the grandfather of the present tenant of Lochgoin, who, by his worth and intelligence, well sustains the high character of the family.

Lochgoin is part of the Rowallan estate, which extends throughout a considerable part of the parish of Fenwick. The Mures of Rowallan and Polkellie, in the same parish (not the place of the same name in Renfrewshire, as some have supposed), was one of the most ancient and excellent of the Ayrshire families; and we believe it was in the time of David Mure, the then head of the house of Rowallan, that the Howies settled at Lochgoin. This David Mure is the first of the family of which we have any record. His son, Gilchrist, fought and distinguished himself at the battle of Largs, in 1263, and was knighted for his bravery there. He died about the year 1289, "near the 80 years of his age," as the family history records, and was buried "with his forefathers in his own buriell place in the Mures Isle, Kilmarnock." From the earliest times the Mures appear to have been excellent people, mild and generous, yet brave; and this may have had something to do with these foreign refugees being allowed to settle upon the lands of Lochgoin. It would be interesting to learn whether the place was then the bleak, naked solitude it is now. At some early period, and possibly then, the deep, dark moors of wide extent which lie all round this lonely habitation must have been largely

covered with wood, and the place, standing as it does at an elevation of fully nine hundred feet above the sea, would then have a shelter afforded to it which it does not now possess.

Humble as this dwelling is, its name is known wherever Scotchmen are to be found,—and where are they not to be met with? It lies in the north-east part of the county of Ayr, and almost on the confines of Renfrewshire, and to a stranger it looks a place of perpetual desolation, only relieved by a few green meadows, and a few patches of cultivated land which yield poor and precarious crops even in the best seasons, but which in late and bad ones prove total failures. As if, however, to make up in part for the isolation and dreariness of the situation, the view obtained from LochgoIn is as charming as it is extensive. Away to the west, and far below, the eye can take in all the great stretch of rich and lovely country lying between, and the broad blue Firth of Clyde, which, when the weather is clear and fine, is to be seen for many miles along the coast, on which stand prosperous towns, picturesque villages, and lordly seats; while far away beyond, in the glad bright days of summer, the sunbeams can be seen playing among the flinty and splintered peaks of the lofty Goatfell in the lovely Isle of Arran: while farther to the south lone Ailsa Craig rises high above the waves which wash and war with its rocky base; and far away

between, and at a still greater distance, may be descried the Mull of Kintyre—the Epidium Promontorium of the Romans—stretching far out into the bright and shining sea. To the south, the blue hills of Galloway close in the view. Far away to the north and north-east Ben Lomond, and many another mountain in the land of the Gael, are to be seen, in sublime confusion, piercing the clouds with their summits. Eastward, the view is more circumscribed, and of a more savage and less inviting character, although to the south-east the strangely shaped Loudoun Hill lifts its bare forehead to the sky, near to which the “bloody Graham of Claverhouse suffered an ignominious defeat at the hands of a brave oppressed peasantry.”

In such a place, especially previous to the present century, when roads were few and bad, the people lived much alone, and consequently their converse was to a large extent with Nature and with Heaven; and if the desert did not always “give them visions wild” it inspired solemn thoughts, and tended to make them muse upon the deep things of God, and things not of the earth. Like the Hebrew prophets of old, the voice of Nature was to them the voice of God. The thunder, as it rolled along the sky, and reverberated among the mountains and glens, making the deserts around them to quake, was the call of the Most High to men upon earth to bow before his footstool and adore; while the lightning bolts, as they darted

from cloud to cloud, or scorched the heath upon the hillsides, were the irresistible arrows shot from Jehovah's bow by his strong right hand. The aurora borealis, or streamers, as they were then, and are still, popularly called, were regarded as signs of coming woes and judgments upon nations and individuals. The people were more fully persuaded of these judgments when, a few nights after the 30th October 1688,—the date on which this phenomenon was first seen in this country,—the Prince of Orange landed at Torbay, and drove that iron-hearted tyrant and bloody persecutor, James II. of England, from his throne and from his country for ever, leaving to posterity a name more odious than any other monarch, because of his treachery and his cruelty, men having been shot down during his reign as if they had been beasts of prey; while aged matrons and young and tender maidens were drowned like dogs, tied to stakes within the tide mark of the surging sea. Now when the tyrant's hour was come, and when the Most High made "inquisition for blood," the winds lulled themselves to rest, and the troubled sea became calm and glassy to aid the landing of the country's deliverer.

The wonderful display of the aurora borealis (whether really the first of the kind or not), preceding by only a few days the flight of King James, and the close of the long, dismal period of persecution, produced a great impression upon the then

dwellers at Lochgoin, as the writer's father learned from the mouth of the author of the "Scots Worthies" himself. Although it is now nearly two hundred years since the close of the persecuting period, yet in this instance the links which connect us with such a distant past are surprisingly few. The grandfather of the author of the "Scots Worthies," and with whom he was brought up, died in the year 1755, at the great age of ninety; so that he had reached the age of twenty-three years when the persecution came to a close. His grandson, at the time of the old man's death, had reached the age of twenty, and so had numerous narratives of these times of "darkness and blood," from the lips of one who had thus lived and suffered in them. The writer's father—also a Fenwick man—was born in 1768, and had reached the age of twenty-five years when the author of the "Scots Worthies" died. They were not only intimate, but were fast friends, and worshipped together under the ministry of the Rev. William Steven of Crookedholm, near Kilmarnock; and we have heard our father tell how they had sat at the Lord's table together, so that the supposition of some that John Howie, because of his strictness of principle, ceased to worship there in the closing years of his life, is altogether incorrect. From his mouth, then, the writer's father had numerous relations of the times and events of the persecuting period; and we have heard him mention this

striking display of the aurora borealis among others, and which, from those who witnessed it, until the account of it reached the writer (who is the son of his father's old age), had only passed through two links, those of the author of the "Scots Worthies" and the writer's father.

In "The Testament, testamentar, and Inventar of the guideis, geir, debts, and sowmes of money quhilk porteint to vmquhill William Muir, elder of Rowallane, within the parochin of Kilmarnock, wha deceist in the month of November, 1616," *Lochgoin* is twice rather curiously mentioned. The first is in the inventory of the said William Mure's effects, and mentions "ane auld broune meir in *Lochgoyn*." The second is in the sums due to him, thus—"Debts awand In.— . . Be Johnne Howie in *Lochgoyn*, for the crop 1616, 60 stains cheis, at 20s." From this it would appear that the farmers then had the experience of "hard times" as well as now, seeing that the tenant of this upland farm was behind with his rent, for which, doubtless, he had not been pushed, as his newly deceased laird is described in the history of those times as "of a meik and gentle spirit, and delyted much in the studie of phisick, which he practised especiallie among the poor people with very good success. He was ane religious man, and died gratiousslie in the year of his age 69."

The deep and widespread interest which *Lochgoin*

possesses for the people of Scotland commences with, and was caused by, its connection with the long and dismal persecution of the Covenanters by the infatuated, callous, and cruel brothers, Charles II. and James VII., both of whom grossly abused their privileges, and disgraced the throne. Because of the events which took place at Lochgoin then, and the subsequent life and writings of the author of "The Scots Worthies," it must ever remain a place of over-topping interest, and of frequent pilgrimage to all pious and patriotic Scotsmen who, in their ecclesiastical polity and religious opinions, are, in any respect, followers of the heroic Covenanters.

The tenant of this wild and lonely moorland farm during these years of wrong, rapine, and blood, was James Howie—said to be the first change from the name of John in the tenants of the farm for many previous generations—whose escape from a violent and bloody death appears very remarkable, seeing that he was not only an unflinching Covenanter, but was well known as a harbourer of those on whose heads a price had been set, and who, therefore, were fugitives, and hiding from those who sought their lives. Here were wont to come the calm, earnest, pious Cargill; the rapt, heroic Cameron; the dauntless Captain Paton, of Meadowhead; and that other equally brave and Christian soldier, John Nisbet, of Hardhill; the enthusiastic and holy Renwick; and many others

of those “Society people” who then “wandered in deserts,” and “of whom the world was not worthy.” We know not what family James Howie had besides his son John, who was born in 1665, and thus lived through twenty-three years of the persecution, and who survived it for the long period of sixty-seven years. The father, as well as the son, outlived the persecution (he dying in 1691), though escaping oftentimes like a bird from the fowler’s snare; for on numerous occasions the family had to fly into the surrounding moors for safety, while on no fewer than twelve occasions their house was barbarously plundered by a ruthless and bloodthirsty soldiery. Once all the cattle on the farm were driven away, and taken to the old Castle of Dean, near Kilmarnock, where they were “shut up in a close and continued for eight days, and Sir William Muir, of Rowallan (Howie’s Laird) sent a few car-fulls of straw to keep in life, and at last bought the whole of them from Major Captain Inglis for six hundred merks, and turned them back to the ground in a way they call *steel-bow*, and in all their plunderings they had still to let the cattle alone, and before the Revolution James Howie had them all relieved in a private way, and Rowallan paid.” This we learn from “A Narrative of James Howie’s Sufferings in the late Persecution.” From it we also learn how the father and son were frequently hunted and fired at by the

soldiers while flying through the moors for their lives; and how the wife of the former—brave Isobel Howie—on one occasion overpowered one of the bloody dragoons, a Sergeant Rae, in a scuffle, throwing him to the ground till the other inmates escaped, although for this we are told that “after this she had always to flee, and lay many a cold night in a moss-hag for shelter, with a young child at her breast, and sometimes to a neighbour’s house, till their fury a little abated.”

The most remarkable man of all this notable family, however, was John Howie, the author of that long and widely famed work, “The Scots Worthies.” Not unfrequently some of the greatest, as well as the best men to whom our country has given birth, have first seen the light far out among the wilds, and have been nursed among the moorland solitudes, passing nearly all their days far away from seats of learning, and from the society of the cultured and refined. Wanting, perhaps, in polish, and in the fluency of speech of those who have been brought up and educated in our large cities, and who have therefore constant intercourse with persons of refinement and intelligence, they have very generally been found to be far more original thinkers; and when they have given themselves to literary pursuits, they have often displayed greater strength and more originality of mind, allied to much simplicity of manner,



and some peculiarities of style. It was such circumstances as these which made John Howie, “that fine old chronicler of the Cameronians” (as Sir Walter Scott designates him), as much a literary wonder as he was unequalled for his knowledge of the Covenanters and their times, and whose greatest work, “The Scots Worthies,” which records “their deeds, their wrestlings, their renown,” shall perpetuate his own name, as well as theirs, to latest ages, and to a period when every monument of stone which now stands erected to their memories shall have “waxed frail and crumbled into dust,” beneath the long-continued touch of the wasting fingers of time.

John Howie was born at Lochgoin on the 14th November, 1735, only forty-seven years after the sword of persecution had been sheathed, and while its tragic and bloody memories were still fresh in the minds of men. When quite a babe—being only about a year old—he was taken to reside with his maternal grandparents at Blackshill, in the parish of Kilmarnock, fully four miles to the south of Lochgoin, and then, at least, still a moorland solitude, “where nature sowed herself and reaped her crops.” Here he lived till he grew up to man’s estate, having received what was then considered a good education, first at a place called Whirlha, and latterly at Horsehill, about two miles south-east of the village of Fenwick.

From his early boyhood he had been a frequent visitor at Lochgoine, where his paternal grandfather resided, of whom we have already spoken; and from whom he received many graphic as well as circumstantial accounts of the men and times of the Covenant; and we can fancy the old man pointing out to his earnest and enquiring grandson the places which had been hallowed by the prayers of those holy men in their hidings, and who had afterwards sealed their testimony with their blood;—to the moors and the mountains where they had passed days and nights in hunger, coldness, and pain; or to some secluded glen in the lonely wilds, where the persecuted ministers had preached to their people by starlight until the young man's heart (as he afterwards told) was stirred and fired within him in admiration of the deep devotion of those men of God to truth and right, and of indignation at the cruelties and wrongs they had suffered. It was the contemplation of these “faithful contendings,” and his reading the MS. life of James Renwick,—the last of the Scottish martyrs —by Alexander Shields, which made John Howie first resolve to collect materials and write “The Scots Worthies;” and it is interesting now to read what he himself relates regarding the writing of that work. He says:—“While I was writing and collecting the first draught of *The Scots Worthies*, sometimes in the mornings; one morning my wife, who was not with-

out an inclination to religion, being in bed in the closet where I was writing, she was just going to give me a reproof for my folly in writing. What would I do but make people laugh at my folly? Immediately these words came into her mind,—Mark vii. 37. *He hath done all things well; he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.* After which she durst never speak against it.” The work first appeared in 1775, and at once became popular; a second and enlarged edition being published in 1781. Since then it has gone through numerous editions, and in the homes of the common people of Scotland, it was long one of the best known and the most popular of all books. Written with great simplicity, and in an unpretentious style, it embalms the memories and the sufferings of the Covenanters in narratives of thrilling interest. The lengthened introduction shows much research and a fine judgment; and is by far the most eloquently written portion of the volume.

John Howie compiled and published numerous other works designed to perpetuate the fame, vindicate the polity, and defend the doctrine and mode of worship of the Covenanters, and of their successors—the Reformed Presbyterians, or as he calls it, “the Reformed Church of Scotland,” of which he says:—“I designed nothing but a defence of the doctrines and discipline that we were by Solemn Covenant engaged unto, and the late Martyrs sealed with their blood.”

One of his best written works is also one of the most curious; it is entitled "An Alarm unto a Secure Generation." This work was first published in 1780, and at least one other edition appeared in the author's lifetime. It not only shows that he had been a careful observer of the signs of the times, but that he was deeply read on the subject of which the little work treats, and these works the author quotes to show that, from the commencement of the Christian era down to his own day, large numbers of the most learned and able men held the same opinions as he did, as to the occasional appearance of strange, mysterious, and striking sights in the heavens and in the earth, and that there really is—as the late George Gilfillan has said in our own day—"A strange mysterious sympathy between the various lines of the divine procedure, that when God's providence smiles, His works in nature often return smile for smile, and that when His moral procedure is frowning, His material framework becomes cloudy, threatening, and abnormal too, seems proved by facts, as well as attested by the dictates of a true philosophy; and that when God shall close our present economy, and introduce His nobler and His last, this may be announced in the aspects of nature as well as of society—that the heaven may blush and the earth tremble before the face of their King—that there shall be visible signs and wonders, seems at once

philosophically likely, and scripturally correct. An earthquake shook the cross, darkness bathed the brow of the crucified, the rocks were rent, the graves were opened, Jerusalem, ere its fall, was not only compassed, but canopied with armies. A little time before the French Revolution, night after night the sky was bathed in blood—blood finding a fearful comment in the wars which followed, in which France alone counted five millions of slain!"

That John Howie was entirely of this belief, no one can doubt who peruses this work, which he entitles "An Alarm unto a Secure Generation; or, a Short Historical Relation of some of the most Strange and Remarkable Appearances of Comets, Fiery Meteors, Bloody Signs, Ships of War, Armies of Foot and Horsemen fighting, etc., that have been seen since the Birth of Our Saviour (as the tokens or fore-runners both of promised Mercies and threatened Judgments), through different Ages; particularly those lately observed in the Parishes of Fenwick, Eaglesham, and Kilmarnock." In this work many truly remarkable appearances in the heavens, and on the moors of the parishes named, are related, numbers of which were witnessed, and fully attested, by the most trustworthy persons in John Howie's own day, and of his own acquaintance. In a note to the work he says, "Show me from history any extraordinary event or revolution that has fallen

out in any kingdom or commonwealth, since the destruction of Jerusalem, but what was ushered in by some remarkable appearance of one kind or another. It is true they are not all mentioned by one historian; but what one author omits is often observed by another."

There is much of the old covenanting spirit in the book, and of that strange and mysterious prophetic insight into the future which we find is so large a feature in "The Scots' Worthies," and which M'Gavin tries at all times to explain away in numerous notes, which greatly disfigure his edition of that work, for the editing of which he was ill qualified, both from his ecclesiastical sympathies, and his want of knowledge on many matters connected with the times and persons about which he essayed to write. Thus, it is laughable now to read, that "John Howie is the person whom the *Great Unknown* called *Old Mortality*," when it is well known that Scott never dreamed of such a thing, but that, as he himself has stated, the individual so named was one Paterson, a native of Closeburn.

In the spring of 1791 John Howie's health began to give way. "I took a sore throat," he says, "and was threatened with a hoarseness at this time, though but in a languid condition. I was enabled at times in prayer, to beg the Lord that this disorder of my throat might not gain so far upon me as to hinder

me from singing of Psalms of praises to Him, an exercise I particularly delighted in." The last time we find him able to attend public religious services was in this year (1791), when he went to the village of Fenwick, to hear Mr. Steven of Crookedholm, who had come there to preach. About this time his eldest son, by his first wife, died of smallpox, which greatly crushed the infirm father's spirits, and though, more anxiously than ever, he sought consolation from the gospel; yet it is sad, at such a time, to hear him saying "that" spiritually, "he was often in but a poor condition." It is with gladness, however, that we read these cheering, elevating sentences, with which this "severely good" man's autobiography concludes—"Here He only supports us against the fears of death, but there He shall set us beyond the reach of death, and we shall die no more—*because I live, ye shall live also.* There we shall be admitted into the company of the firstborn, that stately troop, whose glory it has been to have their *garments washed in the spotless blood of the Lamb*, and continually flourish before Him, one glance of whose glorious and beautiful face shall make all sighing and sorrow to flee for ever away." He died on 5th January 1792, at the comparatively early age of fifty-seven years and one month, notwithstanding that, he is almost always styled "old John Howie," and was buried in the churchyard of Fenwick among the dust

of many former generations. Of his grave there we will have occasion to speak when we come to describe our visit to that notable "Home and Haunt of the Covenanters."

Many years have come and passed away on the unstaying yet still unwearied wings of Time, since we paid our first visit to Lochgoin. It is fully more than half-a-century since then, and so we must, at least, be beginning to grow old. It was in the bright summer time of 1834 that we first set our eyes upon this, the most interesting dwelling among all the moors of Scotland. Two years earlier we had been helped over the broad, dark waste, and across the deep moss-hags, in order to reach the grave of Richard Cameron in the dreary Airsmoss; but two years work wonders on a boy, and now we could leap the deep mossy ruts like a young roe, and run across the wild with a fleetness of foot hardly less than that of the ill-fated Asahel, whom Abner the son of Ner slew for following so fleetly after him, with a very different intent from ours when we first came in sight of the Lochgoin "Tope" (Tap, it is always pronounced by the country people), and bounded away from the side of our surprised father, and slackened not our speed until we stood on the highest part of this ancient outlook, or watch-tower of the Covenanters.

"The Tope," whatever the word may mean, has

now fallen down, and is nearly level with the ground ; but then it was standing strong and entire, and, if we remember rightly, would be at least eighteen or twenty feet high. It was erected of these great trees which are so often to be found embedded in the black peat moss, and when dug out are as black as the moss itself, and as hard and strong, almost, as granite stone. Of these, some set upon end, and others of lesser size laid transverse-wise, and covered with turf, the Tope was formed, and from it was obtained the wonderful prospect of the country, near and far, which we have already partly described.

The occasion of our first visit to Lochgoин was a sermon which, that Sabbath day, was to be preached there by the Rev. John Carslaw, then the Reformed Presbyterian minister of Airdrie. The day was bright and warm, with that peculiar "land wave" playing over the moor which many must have seen who have much acquaintance with "the moorland dun," especially in summer. The people came trooping in on foot from all quarters, and sat on the green, dry ground at the west end of the house, and a little to the south-east of the "Tope." Mr. Carslaw preached from a field tent, and the Bible he used on that occasion was the one which had belonged to the sturdy Captain Paton, of Meadowhead ; and well do we remember the awe we felt when the preacher, in one of his most eloquent passages, and when alluding to

Captain Paton, held up the old book, saying :—
“There, there is the very Bible which that grand old Christian soldier held in his hand on the scaffold when he was giving his life for the cause of his Lord and Master, and for the liberties of his native land.” Although we remember that the sermon was one of fervid eloquence throughout, and that the eyes of all were riveted on the preacher from the beginning to the end of the long discourse, yet being young, and with so much otherwise to attract our attention, we hardly remember anything more of the discourse than the reference he made to Captain Paton and his Bible.

A few years after, we resided in this moorland parish, and with a brother,—now, alas! no more,*—made many excursions to the moors which surround Lochgoein; but we never again paid any stated visit to this memorable dwelling-place till fifty-one years had passed away. Often had we been contemplating a pilgrimage to this noted home and resort of the Coven-

* It was this brother who first suggested the writing of these sketches, and in their progress he took the deepest interest. With a mind deeply imbued with religion, and with a warm and an intelligent love for the memory of the Covenanters, he anxiously awaited the publication of the present sketch of Lochgoein; but he was cut off suddenly on the 16th of December, 1885, and before it appeared, and I am left to lament the loss of one of the best and most intelligent of brothers, and a good man; and I cannot help feeling that I shall experience less pleasure in my work now that he is gone. I know at least how greatly I shall miss his wise counsel and kind encouragement in my future writing.



nanters, but somehow it was always deferred until the autumn of last year, when we got an invitation to join a party of three friends who reside in the vale of Irvine, and who were about to drive over to Lochgoon on a set day. The morning train soon took us to the town of Galston, where we met a worthy and highly intelligent Christian friend, Mr. Robert Young, who, we believe, is distantly related to the Howies of Lochgoon. With him were two brothers of the name of Miller, as thorough Scotsmen, and almost as gifted, in many respects, as the great Hugh Miller himself. We were soon on our way, and though the sky was dull and threatened rain, our spirits were bright and buoyant; and although our companions were less conservative regarding the connection between the State and the Church, and a few other things, than the writer, or the Covenanters, whom we have all our life delighted and striven to honour, still no happier or more agreeable four ever drove away past "Loudoun's bonnie woods and braes." Passing through this parish, we then entered, and likewise passed through, the upper part of that of Kilmarnock, and then entered that of Fenwick, a name which sounds like a charm to the ear of a Covenanter. We soon pass the little village of Waterside, at the foot of the Hartshaw moor,—vulgarly but improperly called Hairshaw,—away up in which is Clafin, once the residence of a certain non-hearing Cameronian, named John Calder-

wood, of the sternest sort, the author of numerous treatises and pamphlets, one of the latter being referred to by Lord Macaulay in a footnote to his famous history, which was no small surprise to us when first perusing that great work, and which, more almost than anything else, convinced us that Macaulay really did deserve to be called "a walking Encyclopædia." John, though very wrongly a non-hearer, from conscientious strictness of principle, was nevertheless a good Christian, and a man of much ability notwithstanding his strangely narrow creed. Once, when a boy, we saw the old man when he was on a visit to a very aged Cameronian in the same parish, named Currie, who was then on his deathbed at Fieldhouse, whom he prayed with fervently, and exhorted most earnestly with strong native eloquence, and with no dim, dark views of the way of salvation through the atoning blood and the righteousness of the Lamb.

Away down on our left, as we drove along, was the village of Fenwick, where the saintly William Guthrie had his triumphs and his trials; but of him we do not at present speak, and so we push on and reach Laighmoor, where we turn up the Glasgow road to the east. It was more than forty years since we had passed that way before, and so it was with deepest interest that we gazed upon the once familiar places, and thought that hardly one of all the dwellers

there then, but had now passed “that awful bourn” which separates time from eternity!

About a mile to the east of Laighmoor, we pass the farm of Harelaw on the left, on which tradition, from time immemorial, has reported that a battle was fought in the long-forgotten past; and this is every way likely, as not only have ancient war weapons been found in some of the adjacent fields, but on the farm of Raithhill (meaning *the fort hill*), a camp and a castle are said to have stood in the olden time; and near to the house there is, or was forty years ago, a well called the Castle-hill well.

Half-a-century ago the road to Glasgow lay up a steep hill and past the famous inn of Kingswell, which tradition associates with some incidents in the life of King James V. Since we can remember, there was no busier country inn than this. Here, almost hourly, the Glasgow, Kilmarnock, and Ayr coaches were arriving, changing horses, and then hurrying away; while private carriages, gigs, and long relays of carriers' carts were always coming, halting, and then after breakfast to the drivers, or a dram—and always the latter, at least—passing on their way. Old James Picken (whom memory pictures to us still, with his green coat with its shining brass buttons, and his white hat) was one of the best of landlords, always sober as a judge, never boisterous, no “pluck-him-in” entrapp^r of the simple or unwary, shrewd,

sensible, and a gentleman. He made a fortune, lived respected, and died universally regretted.

About the close of Mr. Picken's long and honourable career, a new road was made through the Drumboy Moss, to escape the steep hill leading up to the inn, and which led the whole traffic nearly a mile away to the north-west of Kingswell, and from that day until now its long and ancient glory has departed; railways more recently making even the new road to be but little frequented.

At Kingswell the road strikes off to the right for Eaglesham, and knowing that the present tenant of Lochgoin, some twelve years ago, had (with more enterprise than belongs to moorland farmers generally) made a good macadamised road somewhere through the moss to his house, we halted at Kingswell to inquire how far we must drive before we would find that road. The place is now a quiet farm house, and the door was answered by a blithe, active, and good-looking young woman (a daughter of the farmer, we believe, although, as now "the storm grew loud apace," we had not patience to inquire), who told us how far we must go, and where we would find the road we sought.

Just then the farmer (Mr. Gavin Dalziel, whom, as a boy, we had known as one of the quietest, best behaved, and strongest men in the parish), appeared with a hay fork in his hand, coming in from the

stackyard. Although a generation and a half had glided down the steeps of time since we had set our eyes upon him last, we knew his tall strong form and sedate countenance in a moment; and as he stood gazing at us, to give him a surprise, we shouted to him by his Christian name, when with eyes opened wide with wonder, he came quickly towards us eagerly scanning our countenance, and trying to make out who the speaker was. But the sober, elderly man,

“ Around whose haffets float half hoar
The locks of sixty years,”

looks very different from the playful lad of thirteen, and, so of course, to Gavin it was all mystery who the speaker could be.

Perhaps it was our roguishness when a boy, at all events it was something, which had still continued to keep us in his memory, for when we mentioned our name (my companions he had never known), he grasped our hand with that warmth which told at once the sincerity and the warm-heartedness of the man as he exclaimed, “O man! I kenned ye weel when ye were a boy.” Mr. Dalziel married a grand-niece of the author of the “Scots Worthies”—a most excellent woman, but now, we think, no more—and in this way he and his family are connected with that of Lochgoin.

Driving away amid the howling storm and the drenching rain, we soon reached the entrance to the road we sought, which is a little way to the west of Balagich Hill, or the King's Seat, over which the road to Eaglesham passes. A little way to the north-east of this is North Muirhouse, the birthplace of that true poetic genius, Robert Pollok, whose great and original poem *The Course of Time*, though severely, almost hyper, Calvinistic, and too frequently disfigured by a mannerism which becomes wearisome—nevertheless contains numerous passages of sublimest poetry which neither Milton nor Young, at their best, have surpassed. Besides his great poem, Pollok wrote "Tales of the Covenanters," three in number, two of which, "Helen of the Glen," and "The Persecuted Family," are perfect gems for pathos and eloquent description, and both, in Scotland at least, have made more tears to course down the cheeks, than either the *Othello* of Shakespeare, or the *Venice Preserved* of Otway.

The birthplace of Pollok, like so many other small, or middle-sized farms, has now been laid into another, and ere long, we fear, under the infatuated system which has been pursued for nearly two generations now, the house which has become hallowed as the residence of this great and Christian poet, will fall, and become, like that of which another charming poet and sincere good Christian—the Rev. Henry Scott

Riddell—thus touchingly sings, and of which we ourselves have seen so many instances—

“ The cold, cold damp was on the stone,
Where bright the fire once glowed,
And the mole had dug her path where he
Had knelt to worship God ! ”

It is a wild spot, yet there is a pleasant sweetness about this pastoral wilderness. Pollok himself thus describes his moorland home as standing—

“ Mang hills and streams,
And melancholy deserts where the sun
Saw, as he passed, a shepherd only here
And there watching his little flock, or heard
The ploughman talking to his steers.”

When in his 28th year, Pollok was licensed to preach the gospel by the United Associate Presbytery of Edinburgh. The same year his great poem was published, and became immediately popular; but fell consumption laid its unrelaxing hand upon him, and the same year, which had witnessed the two former most important events, witnessed a third, and one more solemn and important far—the death of the gifted and pure-minded poet, who, when on his way to a warmer clime, died at Shirley Common, near Southampton, on the 18th of September 1827, and was buried in the churchyard of Millbrook, where a granite obelisk has been erected over his dust, and where, resting in hope, far away from the shadow of those “ goodly trees” where “ oft he sat and thought,”

he takes that long deep sleep from which he shall not awake till the dawn of that last dread morn, when the piercing peal of the archangel's trump shall strike with terror the astonished earth !

Turning off to the right, and on to the new road which leads straight to Lochgoine, we noticed (and viewed with delight though the rain was falling in torrents) the great abundance of the blooming heather, which grew everywhere around, and which, notwithstanding its monotonous appearance, looked exceedingly beautiful. A mile of nearly a straight drive southward brought us to the renowned and hallowed dwelling, where, receiving a quiet but cordial welcome, we were soon seated before a warm and glowing fire of peats, which made the steam rise from our wet clothes like a thick morning mist in summer among the upland valleys. Mrs. Howie, with easy, quiet, intelligent grace, showed us the relics gathered there. The most interesting of all, perhaps, is the Bible which belonged to grand old Captain Paton, of which we have already spoken, and which he handed to his wife from off the scaffold when he was about to suffer martyrdom for the cause of Christ, 8th May 1684. Captain Paton's sword is also shown, but from its lightness, if worn by him at all, it must have been more for ornament than use, and when he was a younger man, and engaged as a volunteer in the wars of Germany. It is impossible that Paton, with this

weapon, could have done the feats attributed to him at Kilsyth, Mauchline Muir, Pentland, and many other places. We have no doubt, however, about the genuineness of the sword, or that it really did belong to Captain Paton ; only the heroic acts doubtless done by him must have been performed with a heavier weapon.

The Covenanters' flag kept here, we do not doubt, was waved along the wilds when the shouts of victory rang along the hills at Drumclog. The drum also may have rolled in the hill-breezes of that eventful day ; but this relic, if it has an ancient history, has a modern one too, the last being neither pleasing nor romantic. The drum, it appears, had been getting out of repair, years had been injuring it more than they have done the fame of the Covenanters, and when some years ago a Kilmarnock bailie had *descended* to visit Lochgoin, and saw its decayed condition, he volunteered to have it repaired at his expense. He was allowed to take the drum away for that purpose, and he not only faithfully kept his promise, but he did more,—he also attached a brass plate to it which states that “ Baillie —— of Kilmarnock had repaired it at his own expense.” Being a bailie, we refrain from giving his name, seeing that he has been unable to spell aright his own official name, but spells it with the *l* in *bailie* doubled ! No man, not even a Kilmarnock bailie, has any right to

link his own name on to any relic of these noble men of old.

Among the other curiosities shown are a number of large silver coins which had been hidden by James Howie in the time of the persecution, lest they should be seized by the cruel, plundering soldiers. He was then flying for his life, and he never could find the place or the coins again; but they were come upon almost in our own day by James Howie, son of the writer of the "Scots Worthies." Most of them are foreign coins, and one of them is as old as the sixteenth century.

The library of the author of the "Scots Worthies" has been piously preserved, and it is most interesting to handle the books, and gaze upon the pages on which the good man had pondered. The contents of the library we need not enumerate. It also contains a number of MS. volumes, in the handwriting of the good and painstaking John Howie.

Although the rain was still falling heavily, and the autumnal blast careering wildly across the moor, we went out to view what had once been the flower garden of the pious moorland author. It, of all which we had seen at Lochgoon fifty years before, remained most vividly and fresh in our memory. It was then a well-enclosed, green, and bowery spot; nicely laid out, finely kept, and with a capital collection of herbaceous plants growing luxuriously, with numberless

blooms smiling and gleaming in the bright summer sun. We were sorry to see that this spot, at the southern end of the garden, was sadly altered now. One or two untrimmed bushes still grow there, but otherwise the garden is a wild. We felt sad at the thought, for here, when summer days were fine, John Howie is said to have sat and written many of his books ; and we could not help feeling regarding it somewhat as the poet describes

“ The chamber where the good man meets his fate
Is privileged beyond the common walk
Of virtuous life, quite in the verge of heaven.”

We found the present tenant of Lochgoin, also a John Howie, highly intelligent and most unassuming, and we are glad to hear him spoken of by those who know him well as a sincerely religious man, and, in this and all respects, “one of the excellent of the earth.”

A good many years ago the whole farm steading was rebuilt, but, as formerly, of one storey, and on the very same site as before.

Bidding a kind “Good-bye” to the excellent family, we drove away from this famous spot, and though the storm still continued to rage, we stopped in the moor until one of our enthusiastic companions pulled a quantity of finely blooming heather, which, in all its beauty, stands before us as we write, with all its crimson bloom unfaded, so that, by a very little

stretch of the imagination, we can almost hear the murmur of the mountain bees among the bells of the flowers; for many of our readers may not know that if heather is pulled in bloom, and kept dry, it will remain perfectly unfaded, and retain all its beauty for years.

After an uneventful drive, but with some fine social conversation, we arrived safely at Galston, where, bidding farewell to our pleasant and intelligent companions, the genial son of our kind friend, Mr. Young, drove us to Hurlford, where, catching the train, we reached our home in the valley of the Lugar before the darkness of the night had altogether wrapped in gloom the aged and hoary thorns which cast their shadows upon the grave of saintly old Alexander Peden.





CHAPTER XIV.

FENWICK AND MEADOWHEAD.

O Scotland ! Noble was thy attitude
In stirring times of danger, death, and storm,—
When for Christ's crown ye forth and firmly stood,
And daring deeds right nobly did perform.

Are thou still steadfast as in days of old,
When stood thy martyrs on the field of strife
Could the same glorious things of thee be told?—
“They yield up principle with loss of life.”

Times now have changed,—how ominous and dark ;
False friends within are leagued with foes without,
Intent to wreck the Reformation Ark,
And sing its requiem with triumphant shout.

Woe to thee, Scotland ! when the sacred fire
That warm'd those bosoms which for thee once bled
Is by thy folly suffered to expire—
Thy zeal for truth be number'd with the dead.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON.



T is a very remarkable circumstance that in Scotland nearly every struggle for civil liberty has been conjoined with some great religious movement, and that in both the most able and earnest ministers of the gospel have always taken a most prominent part. This is doubtless to be accounted for because the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ is also

the great charter of civil liberty ; and wherever that gospel has come in its power and in its purity, as has so frequently been the case in Scotland, it has done more to promote the cause of civil liberty, and to ameliorate the condition of the people, than any mere human device has ever been able to accomplish. At the hasty and calamitous Restoration of the profligate Charles II. there was a disposition to admit him as monarch without any sure and proper guarantees for civil and religious liberty. The best and the most far-seeing of Scotland's clergy then, however, saw the error, and contended against it ; and they sought to impress upon that unworthy king the obligations he was under to foster and protect the Protestant Presbyterian Church, and at the same time to maintain and secure all the civil rights of the people. These two great principles they could not and would not disjoin ; and because of this multitudes of them, and of their noble band of followers, were made to suffer to the death during the twenty-eight years of growing oppression and of bloody cruelty which followed. Of this callous, perfidious, shameless, and infatuated king, England's greatest poet of the present century thus appropriately speaks in one of his " Ecclesiastical Sonnets "—

" Who comes—with rapture greeted, and caressed
With frantic love—his kingdom to regain ?
Him virtue's nurse, Adversity, in vain

Received, and fostered in her iron breast :
For all she taught of hardiest and best,
Or would have taught, by discipline of pain
And long privation, now dissolves amain,
Or is remembered only to give zest
To wantonness.—Away, Circean revels !
But for what gain ? if England soon must sink
Into a gulf which all distinction levels—
That bigotry may swallow the good name,
And, with that draught, the life-blood : misery, shame,
By Poets loathed ; from which Historians shrink !”

We often hear it remarked how history repeats itself ; and so, just as there was a hasty disposition on the part of many in the days of Charles II. to replace that monarch on his throne without any proper safeguards for the preservation of civil and religious freedom, so now, in our day, numbers, with their eye upon the former only, would incautiously tamper with the Constitution in order to admit into Parliament the deniers of a God and the revilers of a Saviour ! And in order that they may be able to destroy the national Church, and disjoin the State from the religion of Christ, they would, in part at least, set aside the Treaty of Union, and make the coronation oath a thing of naught ! And in order to accomplish these ends, many strangely infatuated Christians have joined themselves in affinity with those who either deny our God altogether, or who care for none of these things. It is the old story repeated and acted over again, which we find thus described in the 87th Psalm. To-day it may be said of the Church—

" For with joint heart they plot, in league
Against thee they combine.
The tents of Edom, Ishm'elite's,
Moab's, and Hagar's line ;
Gebal, and Ammon, Amalek,
Philistines, those of Tyre,
And Assur join'd with them, to help
Lot's children they conspire.

Who said, for our possession
Let us God's houses take."

All throughout "the fifty years' struggle of the Covenanters" the district now known as the parish of Fenwick had several champions of the cause; but it was not till about the year 1642, when it was disjoined from Kilmarnock and formed into a parish by itself, that it became conspicuous for the part it played in the history of the times.

In 1644 the pious, able, and eloquent Mr. William Guthrie, M.A., was ordained the first minister of the new parish, a church having been built there the year before, which is still standing, and is in fairly good condition, although nearly two and a half centuries have come and gone since then.

A native of Forfarshire and born of a good family, Guthrie received a liberal education, and he and two other brothers became ministers of the gospel. How it came about we cannot tell, but, soon after receiving licence to preach, he was appointed by the great Lord Chancellor Loudoun tutor to his eldest son, Lord Mauchline; and in about a year after, he was or-

dained the first minister of the moorland parish of Fenwick. Although, while studying for the church, Mr. Guthrie made over the family estate of Pitforthie—which was considerable—to a younger brother, it is not to be inferred that he did so without some substantial consideration; and marrying a daughter of the house of Skeldon, in South Ayrshire, the year after his ordination, and receiving some considerable fortune with her, he was not dependent merely on his stipend, but was enabled to live on an equality with the country gentlemen, and was acknowledged as such by themselves; and, although he never followed them in their frivolities, yet he was a keen participator in their innocent sports and rural pleasures—such as fishing, shooting, and curling—"which," we are told, "at the same time contributed to preserve a vigorous health; and while in frequent conversation with the best of the neighbouring gentry, as these occasions gave him access, to bear upon them reproofs and instructions with an inoffensive familiarity."

Until recently, at least, tradition had preserved numerous narratives of his adventures among his rude parishioners, besides those which have come down to us in writing; and the farms and other places are still pointed out where these occurred.

A few years after, he was appointed by the General Assembly to attend the Scotch army as chaplain, and was as popular there, in that capacity, as he always

was as a preacher in the West, when crowds came from all the surrounding parishes to hang upon his fervid and spiritual eloquence. When the Prelatic Party began to plot against Presbytery and the Scotch Kirk, immediately after the Restoration, William Guthrie was not forgotten by them ; but the interest of the Earls of Eglinton and Glencairn, Muir of Rowallan, and other noblemen and gentlemen of influence, prevented him from being molested till a later period than others who had taken a less prominent stand in defence of the Church ; for so early as the spring of 1661, when the Synod of Glasgow, after reasoning long about the measures which ought to be taken for the security of the National Church, referred the matter to a committee, Mr. Guthrie presented the draught of an address to Parliament, which though at first approved of by every one, was at last, by the arts of the "Resolutioners" (the party willing to comply with Prelacy), cast aside. It was therefore owing to the influence mentioned that Mr. Guthrie was allowed to remain unmolested in his parish for other three years. At length, however, the haughty and inexorable Archbishop Burnet of Glasgow declared that, as Guthrie was "a ringleader and a keeper up of Schism in his diocese," he must and would be ejected like the other non-complying clergy. To the dismay and deepest sorrow of his people, the sentence of suspension by the Archbishop was inti-

mated against him, and the Church declared vacant by one of the creatures of that ecclesiastical tyrant the Curate of Cadder—who came with a party of twelve soldiers to protect him, having been promised five pounds sterling for the work. Wodrow, in speaking of this event, says—“As for the curate, I am well assured he never preached any more after he left Fenwick. He reached Glasgow, but I am not certain if he reached Cadder, though but four miles from Glasgow. In a few days he died in great torment of an iliac passion, and his wife and children died all in a year or thereby, and none belonging to him were left. His reward of five pounds was dear bought; it was the price of blood, the blood of souls. Neither he nor his had any satisfaction in it, such a dangerous thing it is to meddle with Christ’s servants.” Whatever may be thought of these calamities which befel the curate and his family, yet few there are who will not look at and consider them with awe, especially as there can hardly be a doubt but that, at parting with the curate, Mr. Guthrie told him “that he apprehended some evident mark of the Lord’s displeasure was abiding him for what he was now doing, and seriously warned him to prepare for some stroke acoming upon him very soon.” Looked at in the relation to this warning of God’s faithful servant, the humble and pious believer in an overruling Providence will be disposed to say, with the Psalmist—“And all

men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; *for they shall wisely consider His doing;*" and they will also remember those fearful denunciations of the prophet bard of Israel against the wanton and malicious oppressors of God's people—"Let his days be few; and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless and his wife a widow. Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out."

Mr. Guthrie remained in the parish for fifteen months after his suspension, although he never preached in it again, as far as is known. What he might have done had his life been prolonged until the years when the fires of persecution were fanned into a fiercer flame, and until the times had become (as they afterwards did in the years which were so appropriately called "the killing time") like those spoken of by the prophet Amos, when there had come "a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the Word of the Lord," it is impossible to say; though, being a man of courage and of zeal, as well as of piety, we do not doubt but that he would at once have taken part with those who then "jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field."

Mr. Guthrie's kind and benevolent disposition was to be seen in his permitting people to turn "the cornfield of his glebe into a little town, every one

building a house for his family on it that they might live under the droppings of his ministry." The prudence and the legality of this act may, however, be questioned; and from some entries of the time to be found in the records of the parish, it is evident that the heritors then did not think that it was so; and even in our own day it bore bitter fruit, and was productive of great hatred and strife between the minister and the people of the parish.

Some fifty years ago the minister (a Mr. Ferguson), finding that the dwellers in these houses had no legal right to them, and that he had such to the ground upon which they were built, treated the dwellers and the little glebe hamlet as the laird of Ellangowan is represented by Sir Walter Scott to have treated the swarthy inhabitants of Derncleugh—he turned the people out of them, and demolished their dwellings; and, though *legally* right, he brought down upon himself the wrath not only of the humble inhabitants of the houses, but of all the people of the parish, so that, though rather famed as a preacher, his usefulness there from that day forth was at an end.

Soon after dispossessing the people of their houses, Mr. Ferguson, desirous of beautifying his glebe, planted a considerable part of it; but within a few months after, the young trees were all one night cut down to the roots. The wanton act was not approved of by the great bulk of the people; it caused a great

stir in the place, and, indeed, throughout the country, and was the cause of a judicial investigation. Suspicion fell upon certain individuals, but the act was brought home to none; and the minister soon after left the place, leaving behind him, and bearing away with him, no pleasant memories.

Mr. Guthrie's brother, "the laird of Pitforthie," dying, his affairs called the ejected minister to the north. He turned ill by the way—the journey then being both tedious and toilsome,—and on the 10th day of October 1665, twenty-one years after he had been ordained minister of Fenwick, he breathed his last, after great but patient suffering, in the house of his brother-in-law in Brechin, in the 45th year of his age, and was buried in the church of Brechin, under Pitforthie's desk. "And as he himself died in the full assurance of faith as to his own interest in the covenant of God, and under the pleasing hopes that God would return in glory to the Church of Scotland, so we have no doubt that his better part—his soul—was carried by angels to those peaceful regions, not one of the inhabitants whereof ever says that he is sick, and is now amid the dazzling glories of those superior orbs which are destined for the heroes of Christianity,—who have turned many unto righteousness, and have borne a distinguished part in the battles and triumphs of the King of Saints."

Mr. Guthrie has left a proof of his great parts

and spirituality of mind in his little treatise, “The Christian’s Great Interest,” once exceedingly popular both in this and other lands ; and it is a pity that it is not so still, for as a safe guide in spiritual matters—keeping by the “old paths,” and setting forth in the clearest and most convincing manner “the everlasting gospel”—it is worth whole libraries of our boasted but bewildering “modern thought.”

If the people of Fenwick were barbarous and ignorant when Mr Guthrie came to the parish, the change and the reformation which, by his persuasiveness, ability, and zeal he succeeded in effecting among them was as remarkable as it has been abiding, for in no parish with which we are acquainted will the people be found more pious, or better informed on religious subjects, and in the families of the Howies (of whom we have already spoken), the Dunlops, the Lindsays, the Curries, the Calderwoods, the Craigs, the Gemmells, and others who have been dwellers in the parish since the times of Guthrie, there are still, and have always been, some of the most faithful and loving followers of Christ, and the true salt of the earth.

Long years ago it was our happy lot, when a lad, to spend two summers in the family of Mr James Dunlop, of Townhead of Gree, in the north-eastern part of the parish, and we never have forgotten, and never can forget, with what intelligence and assiduity

he laboured for the spiritual wellbeing of all the members of his well-ordered household, and we know that his teaching and his example have exercised a lasting influence for good on many; and the excellent man, and the honoured elder of the church still lives—though now an octogenarian. We can still also remember his father, a ponderous man both of body and mind, and one of the sealed witnesses for Christ. Good old David Dunlop, then retired from the farm, and in easy circumstances, resided with his aged partner in life in a house close by, and we can well remember with what breathless awe we would softly steal up to the good old man's door (when he had been left alone on a Sabbath) and listen to him singing, in a deep rich basso voice,

“Those strains which once did sweet in Zion glide,”
to the grand old tunes of York or Norwich. He was an old man then, and his birth would date back to within some seventy years of the close of the persecuting period, and many years now have glided by since he was called away to join the innumerable company, “in raising a still nobler song to the Lamb that once was slain.” He, however, was only one of many others equally worthy whom we could name, and in whose lives the influence of the good William Guthrie was operating long after his own tongue had become silent in the grave.

In mechanical science, also, this moorland parish

has acquired not a little celebrity through John Fulton, who, though only a working shoemaker, succeeded in constructing one of the best, and most perfectly finished orreries which has ever been made. Commencing the arduous, but to him delightful task in 1823, when he was twenty-three years of age, he completed it ten years after, and was induced to exhibit it in the principal towns in the kingdom, crowds coming to view it everywhere, and were delighted at the accuracy with which it showed the motions of the planetary system. Going to London, his health failed him, and he returned to his native parish, but only to die; and after a lingering illness he went the way of all the earth in May 1853. A good man, and a genius, the people of his native village are justly proud of his fame, and greatly respect his memory.

This rural parish has likewise something to boast of in a musical way, for that noble, plaintive, and unsurpassed sacred melody, "Martyrdom," originally called *Fenwick*, was composed by Hugh Wilson, a native of the parish, though only a hand-loom weaver. This tune, we know, has sometimes been claimed for R. A. Smith, the well-known composer. He did indeed attempt to harmonize it, but did not at all improve it. "Martyrdom"—the name by which the tune is now alone known—is exceedingly appropriate to the martyr district in which it

was composed, and to the plaintive, moving melody itself; and it is impossible to calculate the innumerable hearts, the aspirations of which have been sublimed and lifted heavenward by the singing of the grand and time-defying songs of Sion to this “grave, sweet melody.”

As already stated, not only does the church in which Guthrie preached still remain, but the same pulpit from which he proclaimed the word of life, and breathed his rapt and earnest prayers into the ear of the Eternal, is still there, and the sand-glass also by which the minister measured the length of his sermons. The former, however, only is in use now, although in Guthrie’s time, and for long after it, we are told that “when the preacher has announced the text from which he is to preach, the precentor brings forth from a small box a half-hour sand-glass, which he places on an iron stand. When the glass has run out he removes it, and the preacher after that only adds what he finds necessary.” If, when a certain Mr. Crosbie was the minister of the parish, fully half a century ago, the sand-glass was in use, it must either have got several turns ere he had finished his sermon, or he must have held forth long after its removal by the precentor; for though weak in body, and always unhealthy, his sermons were seldom finished in less than two hours’ time, and they often occupied much longer. Only few

people attended him, and by those who did he was reckoned a sort of mystic. The report of this, and of the strange things he uttered, induced us—boy though we were—to go several times and hear him. Of course we did not understand him either, but we have vividly in our memory still his extreme earnestness and solemn, quiet manner, with the dreadful length of his sermons; although trying to discover what his teaching was, and being struck with his grave and awful mein, kept us from wearying under the great length of his services. We believe now that he was a follower of what Edward Irving latterly became, although some of the Fenwick people contended that he was a Swedenborgian. Latterly Mr Crosbie resigned his charge, when the Presbytery was on the point of taking some notice of his teaching, and, going to London, he was lost sight of by the people of Fenwick. We believe he survived but a short time in the capital.

The church, though not large, has rather a fine appearance, built as it is in the form of a Greek cross, and as such, being difficult to roof, a tradition was current in the parish, when we knew it first, that the joiner who had contracted for the work, finding himself unable to execute it, was so troubled in his mind that, losing his reason, he committed suicide.

In the churchyard, which surrounds the church,

there are several interesting memorials of the Covenanters and their times, but surpassing all the others in interest is the stone which marks the burial place of the Howies of Lochgoin, though when we visited the place in the autumn of 1834, we were pained to find the tombstone and grave in a most untidy condition, and the long and broad stone which covers the dust of these grand old worthies, and which has been set on low pillars, swayed much to the one side, and everything about it indicating a great want of care, proving that the memories of the worthy and notable dead, as well as the worth and the true greatness of the living, are less esteemed in their own places than by dwellers at a distance. The first whose memory it records is James Howie, the great-grandfather of the author of the "Scots Worthies," who died in 1691, and whose sufferings and wonderful escapes during the long persecuting period, are among the most remarkable events recorded of it. The original inscription on this stone is to be found at page 197 of the "Memoirs of John Howie, and is as follows:—

" The dust here lies under this stone,
Of James Howie, and his son John ;
These two both lived at Lochgoin,
And by Death's pow'r were call'd to join
This place. The first November twenty-one,
Years sixteen hundred ninety-one.
The second, aged ninety year,
The first of July was brought here,

Years seventeen hundred and fifty-five,
For owning truth made fugitives.
Their house twelve-times and cattle all,
Once robb'd, and family brought to thrall.
All these, before the Revolution,
Out-lived Zion's friends 'gainst opposition."

"And he said unto me, these are they which came out of great tribulation."—Rev. vii. 14.

"The voice said cry, what shall I cry?
All flesh is grass, and so must ly,
As flow'r in field withereth away,
So the goodliness of men must decay."—Isa. xl. 6, 7.

Close beside this one is the grave of the most renowned and greatest of all the Howie family—the author of the "Scots Worthies," and other works, although the one named, of all he wrote, alone lives in our literature, but the fame of that work is likely to last for ever, and it will be an evil day for Scotland when it, and the noble men whose memories it has embalmed, come to be forgotten. The moorland author is commemorated in these unpretentious words—

"Also of his son John,
Who lived at Lochgoin. Author of the
'Scots Worthies,' and other publications,
Who died Jan. 5, A.D. 1793, aged 57 years."

An old monument to the redoubtable Captain Paton of Meadowhead formerly stood against the eastern wall of the churchyard, but, becoming decayed, a new and handsome one has taken its place. We have seen it stated that the inscription on the new monu-

ment is modern, and it has been characterised as “a piece of fulsome bombast,” possibly because it was *supposed* to be modern, which, however, it is not, for the inscription was copied from the old stone; and none who have informed themselves of the bravery and piety of the man will think that there is anything either “fulsome” or bombastic in the inscription, of which the following is a copy:—“Sacred to the memory of Captain John Paton, late in Meadowhead of this parish, who suffered martyrdom in the Grassmarket, Edinburgh, May 9th, 1684. He was an honour to his country; on the Continent, at Pentland, Drumclog, and Bothwell, his heroic conduct truly evinced the gallant officer, brave soldier, and true patriot. In social and domestic life he was an ornament, a pious Christian, and a faithful witness for truth in opposition to the encroachments of tyrannical and despotic power in Church and State. The mortal remains of Captain Paton sleep amid the dust of kindred martyrs in the Greyfriars’ Churchyard, Edinburgh. Near this is the burying-place of his family and descendants.

‘ Who Antichrist do thus oppose,
And for Christ’s cause their lives lay down,
Will get the victory o’er their foes,
And gain life’s everlasting crown.’ ”

There is also a monument near to that of the Lochgoin family, to a nephew of the author of the “Scots Worthies”—a James Howie, of Burnhouses, who died

some forty years ago, whom we remember well. He was a good, and in many respects a great man, and like his forefathers, a Covenanter. The inscription on it, however, is lengthy, fulsome, and bombastic, although the writer of it—the then Reformed Presbyterian minister of Kilmarnock—was a gentleman of ability and taste, and was also an author of considerable fame.

The other martyrs' stones are two to the memories of three martyrs who were shot at Midland, a farmhouse a little way to the southeast of the village of Fenwick, in that year of blood—1685; and one to James White of Little Blackwood, whose tragic end we have narrated in a former chapter. The first bears the following inscription, which is more graphic than polished :—

“Here lies
The dust of John Fergushill and
George Woodburn, who were shot
at Midland by Nisbet and his
party—1685.

When bloody prelates,
Once these nations' pest,
Contrived that cursed
Self-contradicting test,
These men for Christ
Did suffer martyrdom.
And here their dust lies
Waiting till he come.”

On the other the following has been engraved :—

“Here lies
the corps of Peter
Gummel, who was shot to death
by Nisbet and his party, 1685, for
bearing his faithful Testimony to
the Cause of Christ. Aged 21 years.

" This man, like holy anchorite of old,
For conscience sake was thrust from house and hold ;
Blood-thirsty Redcoats cut his prayers short,
And even his dying groans were made their sport.
Ah, Scotland ! breach of solemn vows repeat,
Or blood thy crime will be thy punishment.

This Peter Geminell was the prototype of Robert Pollok's "Ralph Geminell," the hero as well as the name of one of his spirited tales of the persecution, and the same family of Gemmell is still a name in the parish, and they are also known in other parts of the country, as faithful contenders for the same principles for which the youthful martyr of Midland suffered to the death.

These three men, with the good and gallant John Nisbet of Hardhill, had met at Midland for religious converse and prayer when they were discovered, and all save Nisbet (who was taken prisoner and afterwards put to death at Edinburgh) shot in cold blood. There are also in this churchyard monuments to two natives of the parish, one of whom, Robert Buntine, was hanged at Glasgow, and James Blackwood, who suffered at Irvine a month after the battle of Pentland, where they had been taken prisoners. A monument has also been erected to the memory of Guthrie, whose ashes, however, repose far away from the parish in which he laboured so faithfully and to such excellent purpose.

Meadowhead, which will always be associated with the name and the memory of the brave Captain Paton, lies fully four miles east of the village of Fenwick,

and far up in the Hartshaw Moor. Although much of the country around is now under cultivation, it is still a dreary out-of-the-way place, the only road leading to or past it being lost, and ending among the wild moors which stretch far away to the east. When a lad, we used frequently to visit the place, the farmers then being two excellent brothers of the name of Thomson. Part of the house was said to be as old as the days of Paton, but otherwise there is nothing about the place worthy of attention. The story of Captain Paton's life has been so often told, and his adventures are so familiar to all who have any acquaintance with the times of the Covenant, that we need not here repeat them at any length. There can be little doubt but that, like so many others of the Scottish youth of the period, he enlisted as a volunteer and fought for a while in Germany under the great Gustavus Adolphus, and that there, as afterwards at home, he maintained the character of a hero and a true Christian soldier. Returning home, he was taken from the plough to help to oppose the insurrection headed by the brave, but treacherous and inconstant Montrose, and was with the Covenanters when they were defeated at Kilsyth. He afterwards helped General Leslie to defeat Montrose at Philiphaugh, and he likewise took part in the skirmish at Mauchline Moor, when the equally perfidious Middleton attacked the Covenanters there.

For a time after this Paton was at home, and became an elder under William Guthrie, and in 1666 he joined the oppressed people at Pentland. How he passed the time during the next thirteen years, or managed to escape, it is not easy to say, as, in addition to the farm of Meadowhead, where he was born, he possessed also the larger adjoining farm of Art-nock, on the rising ground to the north-east.

Although not present at Drumclog, but hearing of the victory obtained there, when the Covenanters so signally defeated the "foes of Zion and of God," he at once mounted his war steed, and in guarding the river fought bravely on the disastrous field of Bothwell, three weeks later.

A fugitive, and wandering from one hiding place to another, he still managed to elude the enemy for other five years, but was at length taken at a place called Flock, on the border of the parish of Mearns, and being conveyed to Edinburgh, he suffered martyrdom in the Grassmarket on 9th May, 1684, meeting death with the serene composure of one who had long had the seal of his Redeemer set upon his brow, and the peace of God in his heart; and no Scottish soldier of comparatively humble rank has left a nobler name behind him, whether for dauntless heroism or undoubted holiness of life, and of him truly we may say, in the words of the author of 'The Poor Man's Sabbath,' good John Struthers:—

“ Such were the characters sublime,
The giants of the olden time.
Inlaid in law, whose holy charters,
Embalmed are with the blood of martyrs,
The savour of whose gracious names
The ardour of our zeal inflames,
Like them, supremely to regard
‘The recompense of the reward,’
The grace that in the promise lies,
To be revealed when sun and skies,
And earth and sea one destined day
Like morning clouds have passed away.”





CHAPTER XV.

KILMARNOCK AND ITS MARTYRS.

Yes—though the sceptic's tongue deride
Those martyrs who for conscience died—
Yet long for them the poet's lyre
Shall wake its notes of heavenly fire;
Their names shall nerve the patriot's hand
Upraised to save a sinking land,
And piety shall learn to burn
With holier transports o'er their urn.—JAMES HOGG.



UT for the hasty and ill considered restoration of the exiled king, Charles II., there can be no doubt now that, whatever the rule of the country might have been, Scotland at least would have been saved from the twenty-eight dark and dismal years of persecution which followed that ill-considered act, which, in the opinion of S. T. Coleridge, was brought about because the Presbyterians hated the Independents much more than they did the bishops, which induced them to co-operate in effecting the restoration of Charles. For this our Presbyterian forefathers were in a large measure to be excused, because of the horror they had at the very idea of the

Church and the State being disunited, and it was because of this that they so dreaded and abhorred, if they did not actually hate, the Independents who marched under the banner of Cromwell. How differently did the whole body of Presbyterians feel in regard to this subject in the 17th century from what so many of them teach and contend for now in the close of this, the 19th, concerning which, Coleridge says, "Is it not most extraordinary to see Dissenters calling themselves the descendants of the Old Non-conformists, and yet clamouring for a divorce of Church and State? Why, Baxter and the other great leaders would have thought a man an atheist who had proposed such a thing. They were rather for merging the State in the Church. But these modern gentlemen, who are blinded by political passion, give the kiss of alliance to the harlot of Rome, and walk arm-in-arm with those who deny the God that redeemed them, if so be they may wreak their insane antipathies on the National Church!" It is to be feared that too many dissenters have, during the present controversies, wrought themselves up to such a pitch of opposition to the State Church, that their hatred of it is a much more active principle of action with them than even their love of Christianity! Certainly it is far more true in our day than it was fully half a century ago, when this great thinker to whom we have already referred said, that

"there never was an age since the days of the apostles, in which the catholic spirit of religion was so dead, and put aside for love of sect and parties, as at present."

Our forefathers, doubtless, had good cause to hope that the perils through which Charles had come, and exile which he had endured, would have taught him wisdom, and doubtless their hopes rose high when, as he passed through the city of London to his palace of Whitehall, amidst the ringing acclamations of a vast crowd of spectators, and when the ministers of the Church attended, and hailed him with as much joy as the other citizens, he received from the hands of one of their number a richly embossed Bible, and declared, with every appearance of sincerity, that it was his resolution to make that book the rule of his future public and private conduct. Alas ! alas ! Charles was as much the hypocrite then as he was throughout every other period of his worthless and profligate life ; and the people were not long in finding out what the rule of the country was but too certain to be ; for only six weeks after, when the Marquis of Argyle (who had formerly set the crown upon the king's head) went up to London to wait on his sovereign, instead of being admitted to his presence, he was at once apprehended and imprisoned in the Tower, from which he was conveyed in a ship of war to Scotland, tried by the servile Parliament there

for treason, and afterwards most unjustly put to death.

From this time onwards the most oppressive and subversive measures were enacted, and which, though they did not directly lead to the rising at Pentland, yet made large numbers in all parts of the country ready to join in it, in an endeavour either to secure again the liberties of which they had already been deprived, or save those which yet remained to them. This rising at Pentland will be related when we come to describe our visit to that disastrous field of battle, and in the meantime we pass on to describe some of its consequences and appalling results in the West.

Shortly after the sad defeat of the Covenanters at Rullion Green, among the picturesque Pentland Hills, the sickening spectacle was to be seen at Kilmarnock—then, as now, the second town in the great county of Ayr—of two human heads rotting in the light of day, to the grief of many and to the horror and disgust of all.

Very soon after his victory, the notorious—and, in many respects, barbarous—General Dalziel (of whom we shall hereafter speak more particularly) was sent to the west with a considerable body of troops, and took up his headquarters at Kilmarnock, where his horrid cruelties are still matters of tradition, and in this way are still known and remembered by many who have no acquaintance with the written history

of the times; and these narrations are still frequently related by the peasantry of the district, with breathless awe, around the evening fire.

Numbers belonging to the county of Ayr took part in the Pentland rising, from Colonel Wallace, of Auchans, the commander, to George Crawford, the humble weaver of Cumnock, which last, being taken prisoner, was afterwards executed at Edinburgh, and who, while owning the King's authority (as the Covenanters all then did), thus defended his taking up arms: "That which moved me to come along with these men, was their persuasion and my desire to help them (which with a safe conscience I could not well refuse), who being tyrannically oppressed by the prelates, and their dependants and upholders, and seeing no other way was left to be taken, took up arms for their own defence. And if this be rebellion, I leave it to the great God, the supreme Judge, to discern; for, in my weak judgment, I found it warrantable from the Word of God."

The two martyrs whose heads were set up at Kilmarnock at the close of the year 1666, were John Ross, of Mauchline (nine miles south of Kilmarnock), and George Maxwell, of Nether Pollock, in Renfrewshire, who with other eight were all hanged upon one gibbet, though they had all been taken prisoners upon quarter and solemn parole to have their lives spared. From that time, however, and for twenty-

two years afterwards, all such promises were disregarded. What an awful sight it must have been to see ten men all struggling in death agonies on one gallows, with two brothers of the name of Gordon, when they were turned over from the ladder, clasping one another in their arms, and dying in this last moving embrace !

The house in which General Dalziel lodged when at Kilmarnock, stood on the south side of the Kilmarnock Water, near to the end of the old bridge. It stood there till a comparatively recent period, and was looked upon with awe and dread, and pointed out to strangers with troubled looks, as the house of "bloody Tam Dalziel!"

Sending out his soldiers to scour the surrounding districts, all suspected persons were brought before the cruel old soldier, who had also been constituted their judge; and so he delivered such as were appointed by him for death to that dread doom, while from others he exacted no less a sum, in whole, than 50,000 merks, a large and grievous sum in those days, when the country was but poor, and made more so from the long periods of oppression and misrule through which it had come. Many were caught and driven like beasts into a dark, filthy, and loathsome dungeon called the "Thieves' Hole," where there was no sitting-place, and where, while strength lasted, no one would lie down. Some were taken from it only

to be put to the torture before the fiendish general, in order to force them to inform against others, and which when they would not, or could not do, they were either sent back again to the dark and miry dungeon, or were put to death. Some also died from disease contracted from confinement in the abominable place.

Although it does not appear that Lord Boyd, of Kilmarnock (and who had been created an Earl five years before), took any active part against the Covenanters, yet at this time a party of Dalziel's soldiers were stationed at the Dean Castle—the Earl's country residence—about a mile to the east of the town. This was a large and strong building, and like most other castles in those days, it too had its dungeon in which terrible things had been done, and one of the worst is thus related by M'Kay in his "History of Kilmarnock":—"When traversing the fields one day in quest of the sufferers, they (the soldiers) observed an individual hurrying from them at a distance; and, suspecting that he was flying through a consciousness of guilt, they pursued him like demons bent on some infernal enterprise. The man, however, kept in advance of them, and at length reaching a house, he passed through it by a passage which led to the back premises, and, with great presence of mind, concealed himself in a pool of water, where he stood with only his head above the surface. In the course

of a few minutes the soldiers were in the house expecting their prey, but no person, save the mistress of the cottage, was to be found. They threatened her with instant death if she did not produce the object of their search. She acknowledged that a man had run through the house, but who he was, or where he had gone, she knew not. Maddened by disappointment, they seized her and led her captive to Kilmarnock, where, notwithstanding her declarations of innocence, she was condemned to be immersed in a dark subterraneous apartment in Dean Castle. This harsh sentence, we need hardly say, was promptly executed; and tradition affirms that the poor creature was never released, but left to perish in that dreary place among filth and vermin."

Dean Castle, where this atrocity was committed, has long been roofless and uninhabited, although its dim, red walls are still lofty and strong, and one can hardly help feeling that it is well that it is so, and that it has long been utterly desolate, and that the only sounds heard in it are the screams and hootings of that foul bird of night, the owl, and the moanings and sighings of the winter and summer winds, as if the very bird of night was execrating this awful deed, and the winds of heaven still kept lamenting her fate in its sighings among its tall and ruined towers. In this condition it has continued since 1735, when it was accidentally destroyed

by fire, eleven years before William, the fourth Earl, lost his head on Tower-hill, London, for taking part with Prince Charles Edward Stuart in the rebellion of 1745, forfeiting, at the same time, his title and estates. The Kilmarnock Water—on the banks of which the Dean Castle stands—was originally called the Carth, and in allusion to the fate of this Earl, who did his best to restore the evil race of the Stuarts to the throne which, for generations, they had disgraced, an old, traditional rhyme says:—

“The water of Carth rins by the Dean,
That aince was Lord Boyd’s Lodgin’:
The lord wi’ the loupen han’,
He lost his title and his lan’.”

The “loupen han’” refers to the crest of the family.

Tradition has long asserted that its destruction had been predicted during the time of the persecution, and that trees would wave their branches over its ruined walls, and the undoubted growth of an ash tree on an arch over the dining-room, within the memory of those to whom we have talked, was looked upon as the fulfilment of the prophecy. The place, with the land around, now belongs to the Duke of Portland.

Kilmarnock House—the town residence of the Boyd family,—which is in the town, stood, till recently, exactly as it was when the last Earl went forth to the enterprise which cost him so dear; and of it, too, strange tales have long been told, and fully believed by the common people, of some startling warnings

which he received of the dread fate which awaited him.

Kilmarnock suffered grievously from the "Highland Host," which, in 1678, was so cruelly brought down upon the lowlands, particularly upon the west of Scotland, and from a list which Wodrow has preserved, it appears that the parishes of Kilmarnock and Fenwick together sustained losses from these wild and lawless plunderers to the extent of £14,431 Scots.

After the battle of Bothwell, six persons belonging to the parish were sentenced to transportation for being in arms there, five of whom were drowned, when the vessel in which they were being conveyed to the Plantations went to pieces on a rock among the Orkney Isles, on the 10th of December 1679.

It was the custom at that time for the curate of the parish, a Mr. Carnegie, occasionally to cause the doors of his Church to be locked before the close of the afternoon services, and then to have the names of all the heads of families in the parish called over, when those absent were at once reported, and subjected to persecution. About this time a Major White, who, with a number of soldiers, was stationed in the town, committed great barbarities, being empowered to fine and imprison all who would not attend the Episcopal clergyman of the place.

The most notable of the Kilmarnock sufferers,

however, was John Nisbet, called the *younger*, to distinguish him from the martyr of the same name,—John Nisbet of Hardhill,—both belonging to the parish of Loudoun. For having been in arms at Bothwell, and refusing to give any information as to his relative of Hardhill, he was condemned to be hanged at the cross of the town, which sentence was carried out on the 14th of April 1683. He died with calm and fearless composure, and in the full faith of his Redeemer. Often, when a boy, have we lingered there, and, with strange thoughts, surveyed the spot where the gallows stood, from which his redeemed spirit ascended to “the bosom of his Father and his God,” the place then being marked by a round ring of white pebbles, with the letters J. N. in the centre. The spot now is marked with a less beautiful, though it may be a more durable broad iron ring, and is at the south-west corner of the spacious cross, or square, in the centre of the town. Every Sabbath, for years, when a boy, did we pass the place on our way to the house of God, in company with our dear father and mother, brothers and sisters, to sit under the ministry of holy old Adam Brown, of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Mill Lane. He it was who sprinkled the waters of baptism, not only upon the writer's own face, but upon those also of other eleven of the fifteen children who composed the goodly family of our revered and Covenanting father, of whom now,

alas! only five remain on this side of “eternity’s dread brink;” while father and mother have long since gone to “the better land,” which they kept ever in their view; and it wants but two years of a whole half-century since the grand old Covenanting minister (after whom the writer was named) ended his labours on earth to receive his reward in the realms of everlasting light; and so, alas! the writer of these sketches must also be beginning to grow old, although the flight of time has as yet laid none of its infirmities upon him, for with as firm and fleet a foot as ever he can climb the steep hills, and cross the broad and uneven surface of the moors, to seek out and stand once more beside the martyrs’ cairns, which it has been his delight all his life to do. As the years recede from us, however, we take more and more delight (as in this digression) to recall the past, and those steadfast followers of the Covenanters with whom we then—though but a boy—“took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company.”

The burying ground which surrounds the Low Church of Kilmarnock is, beyond doubt, one of the most ancient in the West of Scotland; for it seems certain that a church was in existence here, and stood on, or near to, the very same spot as the present building as early as the seventh century. Little, however, is known of Kilmarnock or of its history till about three and a half centuries ago,

when the whole heads of families in the town and parish, which then included Fenwick, numbered only about three hundred.

As, until a recent period, the ancient churchyard was in full use as a burying place, therefore, notwithstanding the smallness of the population in ancient times, countless crowds of dead must have been gathered into it throughout the many bygone centuries.

More favoured after death than most of the martyrs of the Covenant, John Nisbet's body, after hanging at the cross like that of a felon, was allowed to be buried in the Low Churchyard, and near to the centre of it the steadfast martyr was laid to rest after his soul's rough passage to the better land, and here his dust rests in hope, and awaits the trumpet-call of the resurrection morn, when "the upright shall have dominion over their enemies;" and when the reviled martyrs shall awake, and arise to glory, honour, and immortality. This martyr's best memorial is in heaven, for the stone is but a small one which records his steadfastness unto death. On the one side, and at the top, are the words, "Solemn League and Covenant," and "God and Country,"—what a deep meaning of piety and patriotism do these words contain! Underneath these is this inscription:—

HERE LIES
JOHN NISBET
who was Taken by
Major Balfour's Party &
Suffered at Kilmarnock
4th April 1683 for adhering
To the Word of GOD & our
Covenants. Rev. xii. & 11
Renewed by Public
Contribution
A.D. 1823.

On the other side of the stone are these lines :

Come, Reader, see, here pleasant NISBET lies :
Whose Blood doth pierce the high and lofty Skies.
Kilmarnock did his latter Hour perceive ;
And Christ his Soul to Heaven did receive.
Yet bloody Torrans did his Body raise
And bury'd it into another place :
Saying, *Shall Rebels ly in Grave with me ?*
We'll bury him where Evil-doers be.

The poetry here—overloaded with expletives, and with other defects—is, like most of that of the period, very inferior ; but it contains some information on a dark and brutal deed, which shows the malice of the persecuting malignants of the time. The “bloody Torrans” had evidently disinterred the martyr’s body, and taken it from its grave in the churchyard and buried it at the place where common malefactors were laid. Of this wretch nothing now is known save his perpetration of this inhuman act, and the execration felt at the mention of his name and brutality, proving the truth of the wise man’s prediction, that

"the name of the wicked shall rot." A tradition was current, however, among the pious old men of our boyhood, that although the body of Nisbet was taken by this monster and buried at the gallows' foot, that it was lifted again that same night and reinterred in the churchyard, and a watch kept over it for many nights and days thereafter, and that Torrans had been warned, that if the body was again disturbed his life would pay the penalty of the unholy and brutal act.

At a short distance from the former, and not far from the Church, another monument has been erected to the two martyrs,—John Ross and John Shields—of whom we have already spoken. The inscription on it is as follows:—

HERE LIE
the
Heads of JOHN ROSS and JOHN
S H I E L D S, who suffered at
Edinburgh
Dec. 27th 1666 and had their
Heads set up at
Kilmarnock.

Our Persecutors mad with wrath & Ire ;
In Edin^b members Some do lie, Some here.
Yet instantly united they Shall be,
& witness 'gainst this Nation's perjury
See Cloud of Witnesses.

The reference to the “Cloud of Witnesses,” with which the inscription on the stone closes, is doubtless meant to point the reader to the date on which the two martyrs are said to have suffered, which in all the earlier editions of that work (where the inscription on their tombstone is given among the epitaphs at the end) is said to have been the 17th instead of the 27th of December; while both Wodrow and Crookshank give the date the 7th. The latter date seems most likely to be the correct one,—the mistake having doubtless been made by the person who cut the inscription on the first-erected monument.

There is a third monument in this ancient church-yard to several others who suffered for their adherence to truth, liberty, and the Covenant, in that evil time when the tempest of persecution burst and brooded so long and so darkly over our Scottish hills. It stands facing the south end against the northern wall. At the top of the monument there is carved an open Bible, with, on the one side, these most applicable words from the *xliv.* Psalm—“All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten Thee, neither have we dealt falsely in Thy Covenant,” and on the other the tenth verse of the second chapter of Revelation—“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life;” under which is this inscription:—

SACRED
 TO THE MEMORY OF
 THOMAS FINLAY
 JOHN CUTHBERTSON
 WILLIAM BROWN, ROBERT & JAMES
 ANDERSON

Natives of this Parish

Who were taken Prisoners at Bothwell 22nd
 June 1679, sentenced to Transportation for
 Life, & drowned on their passage near
 the Orkney Isles.

ALSO JOHN FINLAY
 who suffered martyrdom 15th Dec. 1682
 in the Grassmarket, Edinburgh

Peace to the Church, her peace no friends invade ;
 Peace to each Noble Martyr's honour'd shade ;
 They, with undaunted courage, truth and zeal
 Contended for the Church and Country's weal,
 We share the fruits, we drop the grateful tear
 And peaceful alters o'er their ashes rear.

The heroic couplets with which the inscription thus concludes are evidently modern, and a very little critical reflection upon his work might have served to show the poet that the word *friends*, in the first line, ought to have been written *foes*, for these, and not "friends," are the most likely to invade the peace of the Church, and we, who are Christians, neither believe in the "shade" of a departed follower of the Lamb, nor do we raise "peaceful," or any other "alters," over the ashes of the martyrs of the Covenant.

The drowning of the prisoners off the Orkney

Islands was a very dreadful affair, as may be seen from the following brief notice of the mournful circumstance given in the appendix to the *Cloud of Witnesses* :—" Of the prisoners taken at Bothwell were banished to America 250, who were taken away by William Paterson, merchant in Leith, who transacted for them with Provost Milns, laird of Barnton, the man that first burned the Covenant. Whereof two hundred were drowned by shipwreck at a place called Moul Head of Deerness, in Orkney, being shut up by the said Paterson's order beneath the hatches ; fifty only escaped."

One of the most talented and excellent men of the early Covenanting period, connected with the parish of Kilmarnock, was Sir William Mure, of Rowallan, who died three years before the Restoration, in the sixty-third year of his age.

Rowallan Castle, the ancient seat of the Mures, stands on the banks of the Carmel Water, about three miles north-east of Kilmarnock. It is partly ruinous, and it, and the large estate which belonged to it, are now the property of the Loudoun family.

The Sir William referred to (for there were numerous other members of the family who had the same name), was a highly popular author and poet in his day. Besides numerous other works, he published a metrical version of the Psalms about the year 1639 ; and Principal Baillie, who attended the celebrated

Westminster Assembly as Commissioner from the Church of Scotland, in a letter dated at London, January 1st, 1644, thus writes of the learned and pious Baronet's work: "I wish I had Rowallan's Psalter here, for I like it better than any I have seen." As a specimen of Sir William's work, as a poet and translator, we give here his version of one of the Psalms, in its antique form and spelling:—

PSALM 15.

- " Who in Thy tabernacle stay,
Lord, who sall dwell with thee
2. Upon Thy holy mount ? the man,
that walketh uprightlie ;
who just is in his works and wayes
whose mouth and mynd agree
3. in uttering of the treuth ; whose tongue
is from backbyting free.

Hee who no evill to his friend
intends, hee who takes heed
his neigboure, nor defam'd to heare,
nor his reproache to spread.
4. Vyle personnes in whose purer eyes,
contemptable appeare.
but faithful men, that fear the Lord,
are honord and held deare.

Hee, to his hurt, thogh having sworne,
whose faith no change doth staine.
5. By biteing usury, who makes
not by his money gain.
Hee, 'gainst the innocent, for brybs
who hath not partiall prov'd,
the man who these things shall attayne
shall in no time be mov'd."

Mr. Rous' version, which was recommended by the English Parliament, was the one finally adopted, and

has ever since been used in Scotland, and indeed it does not appear that Sir William Mure's version was ever laid before the Westminster Assembly at all. The committee, however, which the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland appointed to revise the version of Rous, were instructed to avail themselves of Rowallan's, and that they did so is clearly evident from the foregoing, as well as from the following version, by Sir William, of the twenty-third psalm.

" The Lord my scheepherd is, of want
I never shall complaine ;
for mee to rest on Hee doth grant
green pastures of the plaine.

2. Hee leads me stillest streams beside,
and doth my soul reclame,
in righteous pathes Hee me doth guide
for glory to His name.
3. The valey dark of death's aboad
to passe, I'll fear no ill ;
for Thou art with me, Lord, Thy rod
and staffe me comfort still.
4. For me a table Thou dost spread
in presence of my foes ;
with oyle Thou dost anoint my head,
by Thee my cup o'erflows.
5. Mercie and goodness all my dayes
with me sall surelie stay ;
and in Thy house, Thy name to praise,
Lord, I will dwell for ay."

We were somewhat surprised in reading the exceedingly interesting and well written work on "Old Church Life in Scotland," by the Rev. Dr. Andrew

Edgar, of Mauchline, to find him expressing himself thus: "At the present day there are not a few persons even in the Church of Scotland, and far more among those who are not of the Church of Scotland, who maintain that the only proper subjects for divine praise, in public worship, are the metrical versions of the Old Testament Psalms. But it may be very well contended that the principles on which these people frame their theory of worship should lead them much farther than this. The metrical versions of the Psalms are not the Psalms themselves, but the Psalms paraphrased and distorted by human inventions to suit the exigencies of rhyme and metre. They are not the verbatim words of inspiration that came from the lips of David and Asaph, or the prophets of the captivity and restoration. They are not even a literal English translation of these words. There have accordingly been strait-laced people that have objected to the use, in public worship, of the metrical version of the Psalms, quite as strongly and vehemently as the late Dr. Begg used to object to the use of human hymns. And their argument is just Dr. Begg's argument carried out to its logical conclusion." Now, on perusing this passage, nothing surprised us more than the absurdities which really able men will occasionally give utterance to. Why, Dr. Edgar's reasoning "carried to its logical conclusion," would compel us to conclude that no translations of any poetry from

other languages can give us the thoughts and sentiments of the author! and Hebrew poetry being subject to rules, as well as ours, not even ours, or any prose version of the Psalms, can, according to Dr. Edgar, give us the “verbatim words of inspiration which came from the lips of David and Asaph;” and this would compel us to conclude that, after all, Christ did not yield up His Spirit to His Father with the literal “verbatim” words of one of these Psalms quivering upon His parched lips, as we had always supposed; for it is clear that the language in which the Psalms were originally written, was not the language spoken by the Redeemer while He sojourned on our earth.

If, however, it is possible to give an author’s meaning in a foreign language at all, it is just as possible to do so in a poetical as in a prose translation; and Dr. Edgar cannot but know that the Scotch metrical version is not a paraphrase of our prose version,—like the feeble drivel of Sternhold and Hopkins, or even of Isaac Watts, which last is really a mere paraphrase, and a very feeble one,—but a translation made from the Hebrew, with far greater attention paid to the literal rendering than to the “rhyme and metre,” which, unlike the literal rendering and the sense of them, are sometimes faulty and a little uncouth to our ear. Our translators of the Revised Version,—it will be allowed—have done their best to give us

the literal rendering, and, though turned into metre and rhyme, the sense, and very often, the words, are the same in our metrical version. It is because it is so marvellously literal that, notwithstanding its few rythmical and rhyming defects, it rises transcendently above all other metrical versions, whether ancient or modern. These blemishes could be easily removed and remedied, and if this was done by some devout and pious poet, then our grand old Scottish version would be the most noble and perfect metrical version of these inspired songs of Israel which the world could ever desire; and we will have just cause to lament the day when our people become less familiar with it than they are, and of which, alas! there are but too certain signs at the present time; for never once do we find a psalm sung at any "revival" service; while in many even of our Presbyterian Churches you hear them sung but seldom, and they are made to give place to weak, though smooth, hymns of mere human origin, and of doubtful meaning. The Psalms are being set aside because of their allusions to the Jewish ritual; though he is but a poorly informed Christian who cannot spiritualize these for himself; and that they have such a direct spiritual meaning and application to the New Testament dispensation is as plain as can be, and is proved by the words of Christ Himself.

In "the good old times," before the great bulk of

them had cast the Covenants, and the still binding obligation of them on posterity, to the winds, the ministers of the Reformed Presbyterian Church used always to go directly through the Psalms by reading a portion of them in the metrical version every Sabbath morning, and explaining the verses in a brief discourse of from ten to fifteen minutes duration, so that all the people could soon sing them “with knowledge and understanding.” A very few words of explanation would often enable the people to do this, and for the young it is of great use in explaining the figurative language of the Psalms. Thus,—to give an instance—take the third verse of Psalm xciii.

“ The floods, O Lord, have lifted up,
They lifted up their voice ;
The floods have lifted up their waves,
And made a mighty noise.”

Now how well would it be before the singing of these lines (and this is a psalm which is often sung) for the minister to explain that the *floods* here referred to meant popular commotion and uproar among the people. Not only are human hymns now being substituted for these noble and divinely inspired odes of Israel, but even the lofty hymns of Cowper, the intensely earnest, if less poetical ones of Newton, and the rapt enthusiasm of the deeply spiritual songs of Charles Wesley, are being pushed aside and made to give place to the productions of Roman Catholics,

Unitarians, Arians, and, indeed, for those by authors of all creeds and of all climes! The cure and the reaction will come some day, we do not doubt; but the poison contained in large numbers of the hymns now commonly in use will have greatly enfeebled the Church, and done much deadly work ere then.





CHAPTER XVI.

A Y R.

When Alpine Vales threw forth a suppliant cry,
The majesty of England interposed
And the sword stopped; the bleeding wounds were closed;
And Faith preserved her ancient purity.
How little boots that precedent of good,
Scorned or forgotten, Thou canst testify
For England's shame, O Sister Realm! from wood,
Mountain, and moor, and crowded street, where lie
The headless Martyrs of the Covenant,
Slain by Compatriot-protestants that draw
From council's senseless as intolerant
Their warrant. Bodies fall by wild sword-law;
But who would force the soul, tilts with a straw
Against a Champion cased in adamant.—*William Wordsworth.*



LTHOUGH the men of Ayrshire played a great and prominent part in the early times of the Reformation,—and on to and down through the protracted Covenanting struggle until the Revolution of 1688,—the county town figures less in the great and stirring transactions of these eventful periods than many other places in the west, and fewer executions took place there than might have been expected, from the many cold-blooded murders which

were perpetrated, from one end of the county to another, during the twenty-eight years which preceded the Revolution. Both George Wishart and John Knox preached repeatedly at Ayr; and that other indefatigable man of God—John Welsh—of whom extraordinary things are told, laboured here for a period of years, until that narrow-minded pedant, King James I. of England, got him banished from the kingdom, because of his maintaining these views—so dear to all true and enlightened Presbyterians still—"That Christ is the Head of the Church; and that she is free in her government from all other jurisdiction except His." For holding and advocating these opinions, he and several others were, as he says himself, "imprisoned and convicted as traitors."

In the early days of his ministry at Ayr, the people there appear to have been little less rude than the wild tribes of Central Africa are at present; but by his firmness, fearlessness, and faithful preaching of the gospel among them, he soon effected a wonderful change for the better, so that, whereas they had despised and defied him at first, they now loved, obeyed, and trusted him on all occasions. One instance of this is given by John Howie and others, in their lives of this remarkable man. "One day two travelling merchants, each with a pack of cloth upon a horse, came desiring entrance that they might sell their goods, and producing a pass from the magistrates of

the town whence they came, which at that time was sound and free. Notwithstanding all this, the sentinels kept them till the magistrates were called, and when they came they would do nothing without their minister's advice. Accordingly Mr. Welsh was called, and his opinion asked. He demurred, and taking off his hat, he stood with his eyes toward heaven for a little while, and though uttering no audible words, continued in a praying posture. He then told the magistrates they would do well to discharge the travellers, affirming, with strong asseveration, that the plague was in their packs. Of course the magistrates commanded them to be gone, and they went to Cumnock, a town about twenty (*sixteen*) miles distant, and there sold their goods, which kindled such an infection in the place, that the living were hardly able to bury their dead." That there is truth in this narrative, tradition in Cumnock has ever since asserted; and a place called "the green braeheads," close to the town,—but never since built upon,—is still pointed out where the humble dwelling of the last victims of the plague (an aged man and wife) stood. Tradition has all along stated that their bodies were left where they died, and that the inhabitants heaped the earth up over them and their house out of fear, and to prevent the infection from spreading again. The place is still well known, and is a little way to the south-east of the Dumfries Arms Hotel Stables,

and has all the appearance of some such movement of the earth having been made at some time or other.

Having at length been permitted to return from France (where for a while he had lived in exile) to London, he desired greatly to return to his beloved Scotland, but was not allowed to do so, and he died in London in 1622, when he had only attained the 53rd year of his age. From the description given of the disease whereof he died, it would seem to have been elephantisis; and when at last the king yielded to his earnest request to be allowed to preach,—though only after he heard that he was dying,—he was so eager to do so, that though weak and ill, and previously suffering great pain, he went and preached “long and fervently,” and then returned to his chamber, and within two hours, quietly, and without pain, resigned his spirit into his Maker’s hands.” His wife, who was the third daughter of the great John Knox, survived him only three years, dying at Ayr in the year 1625.

It is not generally known that John Welsh was the author of the first work of any consequence written against Popery, in this country. The volume, which extends to nearly five hundred pages, was first issued in 1602; and is entitled, “The Morning Star; or, Where was the Protestant Religion before Luther, etc. A treatise repudiating the errors of Popery advocated by the Abbot of ‘Sweetheart’ Abbey,” and is a learned,

well written, and closely reasoned work, and one of the most complete and triumphant refutations of the religion of the Papacy ever written even since that time. We give the concluding paragraph :—"That religion which is contrary to the Scriptures, contrary to the practice of the Primitive Church, which opens a door to all licentiousness, which can bring no true peace and consolation to the consciences of men, which blusheth to be known and made manifest, and which maintaineth many great absurdities, horrible blasphemies, abominable idolatry, is the doctrine of Anti-Christ and the doctrine of devils, which by their own mouths are condemned, and must be erroneous and false. But the religion of the Church of Rome is such, as hath been evidently proved before ; therefore it must be false. Woe, therefore, belongeth to their souls that profess it openly or secretly."

One of the most choice and godly companions of Welsh was John Stuart, Provost of Ayr, of whom the Rev. Thomas Gouge, the eminent Puritan divine of St Sepulchre's, London, gives this relation, and which is so like what might have been done by John Welsh himself :—"John Stuart, Provost of Air, in Scotland, was eminent for piety and charity. He had a considerable estate left him by his father, of which he gave a great part to the poor and other charitable uses. To pass by many, I shall mention only one. His heart on a time being much affected with the

wants and necessities of many of God's people, who were in a suffering condition, he sendeth for some of them to Edinburgh, where being met, and some time spent in prayer, he made them promise not to reveal what he was going to do, so long as he lived; and told them he was not ignorant in what a low condition many of them were, and therefore he had brought some money with him to lend each of them, yet so as they should never offer to repay it till he required the same. Soon after this such a plague broke forth in Air, the place of his abode, that trade much decayed, and he himself, with others, were reduced to straits; whereupon some of the profane in that place derided him, saying that religion had made him poor, and his giving so much to others, like a fool, had brought him to want; but mark what followed: having borrowed a little money, he departed from Air to Rochel, in France, where salt, and other commodities, being exceedingly cheap for want of trading, he adventured to fraught a ship, and loaded her upon credit, and then went back again through England into Air, having ordered the ship to come thither. But after long expectation, he was informed for certain, that his ship was taken by a Turkish man-of-war, the report whereof did exceedingly afflict him, not because he knew not how to be abased as well as how to abound, but out of fears that the mouths of wicked men would be the more opened to the re-

proaching of his profession and charity. But soon after, tidings was brought him that his ship was safely arrived in the road, and upon his going forth, he saw it was a truth ; and through God's providence, as a reward of his charity, he made so much by the commodities of the ship, that after payment of his debts, he had twenty thousand merks left for himself. Though his bread was cast upon the waters, and to appearance lost, yet after many days it returned to him with great advantage."

This incident shows how well Mr. Welsh had succeeded in making this pious Provost of Ayr—with whom he often met for prayer—a man of like spirit with himself. It also shows us in what different condition and how powerful the Turks were then—nearly three centuries ago, when their ships of war seem to have swept and been masters of our Northern seas—from their weak, despised, and helpless state now.

In the year 1650, when Oliver Cromwell invaded Scotland, the town of Ayr had to contribute largely, both in men and money, to help to oppose the invader, which cost it no less a sum than 5800 merks. These troops formed part of the army commanded by the not always over cautious General Leslie, which met with such a sore and signal defeat at Dunbar. Doubtless our west countrymen fought with their usual bravery ; but by Leslie rashly quitting his strong position on Down-hill, (for which the Committee of

Estates was most to blame), Cromwell gained an easy victory over the Covenanters. In his account of the battle, Cromwell says—"The enemy's word was 'The Covenant,' which it had been for divers days; ours 'The Lord of Hosts.' This being their first action between the foot, the horse in the meantime did, with a deal of courage and spirit, beat back all opposition, charging through the bodies of the enemies' horse and their foot, who were, after their first repulse, given, made by the Lord of Hosts, as stubble to their swords."

After this most decisive victory, Ayr, like numerous other places, was taken possession of by Cromwell, and the churchyard of St. John's Church was turned into a fortification. Cromwell, however (whether from motives of piety or policy we will not decide), gave the town the sum of one thousand merks to be applied in assisting to build the present church, which was on a new site. The Rev. William Adair, who was then the minister of the place, was one of the parties to the contract, the demensions of the building "to be four score and ten foot of length, without the walls; in breadth, thirty foot within the walls; and to fix and build thereto an isle of the length of three score six foot from the pulpit to the gavell thereof, and every side wall to be twenty foot high from the foundation upwards; every side wall and gavell three foot thick, and one of the gavells

four foot thick, with two sufficient penns in the side walls; one behind the pulpit and the other before the same, according to the measure and wideness of the isle; to have hewn windows both in side walls and gavells, according to the rule set down by the engineer; all the windows within and without to be hewn work, with one plaster saillze, and every one of them penned; all the cunzies to be of sufficient hewn work; the roof to be of three score cupples, or thereby, and every tree to be seven or nine inches in the square, of sufficient fir-timber; the kirk and the isle to be sarked with sufficient dales, to be slaitted above; the rigging stone to be put thereon sufficiently; the windows to be all sufficiently glassed with glass-bands; and to make sufficient doors, with locks and bands, and to be casten within and without." This extract from the contract shows that our ancestors knew what they were about when they had such an undertaking on hand. The minister represented the magistrates in the contract. The building contractors were Theophilus Rankine, smith, Ayr, and John Masoun and John Smith, masons, Kilmairs. The seating of the church and the building of the churchyard dyke, (the one evidently still standing) were let as different contracts. The building is still in excellent preservation, although some years ago the church was tastefully reseated, and stained glass put into the windows, in some of which are now also

costly and superior memorial paintings. Of late years too, a large and excellent organ has been placed in the church, and when we walked through it recently, in “the dim religious light” which enters through the narrow, heavy-mullioned windows, its rich and solemn tones rolled through the low-roofed pile; a young lady—the only other occupant of the building save ourselves—being then earnestly practising upon it. The entire cost of the church at the time of its erection, with the other buildings connected with it, was 20,827 : 1 : Scots money, or £1708 sterling, which, at the modern value of money, would be between £3000 and £4000. At the south-east corner of the church is an elaborate monument to the Rev. William Adair, which is still in a good state of preservation. He is represented as dressed in his pulpit robes, and is in a kneeling position, with his hands clasped, his eyes closed, and his face turned towards heaven in the attitude of solemn prayer, in allusion, it is said “to his having, through the efficacy of prayer, been the means of turning away some plague-ships which were about to enter the harbour.”

Coming down to the times of King Charles II., a minute of the Council records of September, 1674, shows that the magistrates replied to the orders of the Privy Council, that they had summoned a meeting of the inhabitants of the town “anent signing the band against conventicles;” but the inhabitants ear-

nestly requested three months to consider the same. They further stated that no conventicle had been held there since the 24th of March previous. Two years after this, however, the new magistrates then in power did, in their official capacity, sign a declaration against the Covenant; but this the inhabitants firmly refused to do. The year following (1678), a committee of the Privy Council visited the place, and the reason of their coming thither will be seen from the following extract from the minutes of the burgh:—

“The committee caused cite in the noblemen and heritors of the schyre, for taking of the band against conventicles; and who refused war cited upon ane lybell for keeping of conventicles, hearing of vagrant preachers, and speaking with intercommuned persons.”

As to the matter of “Intercommuning,” it is proper that we should make a few remarks upon it here, and show what it really implied, and the dreadful pains and penalties it carried with it. By these letters of Intercommuning, which we think were first issued by the Privy Council in 1675, the persons intercommuned “were cut off from all society in the kingdom of Scotland, and it was declared that whosoever should receive, harbour, or converse with them, either by word or writing, or in any other way, or supply them with meat, drink, clothes, or in any other of the accomodations or necessaries of life, should be pursued with rigour, as guilty with them of the same crimes; and

all sheriffs, etc., and their deputes, were ordered to apprehend them wherever they could be found."

It has been thought by many who—to their loss—have not studied and made themselves acquainted with the history of the Covenanting times, especially in the last half of the persecuting period, that "Boycotting" is quite a modern invention, whereas it will be seen that—under a new name—it is only an exact revival of part of the wicked and cruel treatment to which our noble, patient, brave, and pious Covenanting ancestors were subjected two centuries ago.

By this terrible sentence of intercommuning, those placed under its ban were forced to leave their homes and wander from place to place, not as a sort of banditti, as Bishop Burnet so falsely and calumniously says, but "as faithful confessors, who, being persecuted in one place, fled to another, according to the direction of their great Lord. And as to their falling into fierce and savage temper, as the same historian saith, though like had begot like it had been no wonder. However, the worst that can with truth be said of them is, that they looked upon and represented their persecutors as enemies to God as well as to them, which they had too great reason for doing."

And what were the crimes for which these men were so persecuted? Only for preaching or hearing in the fields, or in private houses, and for not appearing when summoned, "when they knew too well that

by appearing they must either renounce their principles, or fall a sacrifice to the resentment of their persecutors."

The minute regarding the Committee, already referred to, shows the dreadful state of the country at this period (1678), the year before the battles of Drumclog and Bothwell Bridge. Thus it is stated:—

"The Committee brought along with them to Air, the regiment of redcoats, four brass gunes, twelve wagones; and there was quartered at Alloway and Burrowfield, a squad of the king's horse guard, consisting of fourtie.

* "The entire of the Committee aforesaid, with their artillerie, was upon the seventh of Februar last, and remained to the sixteenth of March instant, and upon the fiftein, the Committee and eight hunder of the regiment, with their artillerie, removed; and my Lord Ross and two hundred of the foot, with the fourtie horse, remained while the nyntein of this instant, and their was little or nothing payed for yr. quarters; and at this tym thair was six or seven hundred northland men quartered in this schyre, round about the burgh, qho in lyk mainer maid no payment for quarters, but took money for day quarters, and were much given to steith, those of the north and high lands.

"As lykwayes it is to be remembered that the clerk nor his men got no *drink money, but great pains, trouble and vexation.*"

Either because the Covenanted spirit of the inhabitants had died out, or, possibly, from fear, compulsion, or policy, we find it recorded of the notorious and blood-thirsty Graham of Claverhouse, that on 9th July, 1679, hardly three weeks after the battle of Bothwell Bridge, and less than six weeks after his inglorious defeat at Drumclog — “John Graham of Clavers, Captain of ane of his Majesties troupes of horse,” along with one or two other military men, were admitted burgesses. In a long minute of date, January, 1682, we find great complaint made against William Cunningham, the then Provost of the burgh, because that “in June before thair (the Covenanters) defeat at Bothuel Bridge, he suffered a partie of these rebels to enter the said Burgh, and take down the heads of severall rebels, affixed to public places there, and also to publish their traitorous declaration at the Mercat Cross, and was so far from opposing these insolences and attempts, and vindicating of His Majesties authority, that on the contrair he did most undutifully and rebelliously countenance the sds. rebels, and allowed them the town drummer and officers to thair publishing the said traitorous declaration ; and not only so, but gave warrants for formall billets or orders for quartering these rebels through the toun under his own hand.” For this the said Provost was fined in the sum of £200 sterling, and to be imprisoned till the money was paid. Others

who had aided him in what he had then done, and who did not appear when cited, were declared rebels by the Lords of the Privy Council, who also appointed another Provost, and other Bailies, because, as stated, for the foresaid act, “the sd. toun of Air hath not only omitted, tint, and lost thair priviledges and rights of election.”

In 1683, a large body of Claverhouse’s troopers were stationed in Ayr, who must have been great scoundrels, as their many cruel and bloody deeds all over the south and west most certainly proclaimed them to be, for the inhabitants were warned by tuck of drum “not to give trust to the soldiery, because if they did, they needed not apply for payment to the officers.”

In June of this year, a circuit court was held at Ayr, and the large number of judges, advocates, writers, and attendants who were present, tells plainly how disturbed the state of the west country then was. They were twenty-six in number, the whole of whom were made burgesses, their names being recorded in the Council books. Besides these, other thirty-seven “servitors” were admitted burgesses at the desire of their masters. “David Smith, common cook in Air,” was also admitted “at the desire of Colonel John Graham of Claverhouse, besides two trumpeters and a mason!” Doubtless this bloody and brutal soldier who “has stained for aye a warrior’s

name," had found these fellows useful tools in the cruel work he was then engaged in.

The persistent attempts of Charles II. to force a loathed Episcopacy upon the people, gave rise to continual trouble, and so largely did the spirit of non-conformity prevail in the Town Council, as well as among the people generally, that things went from bad to worse, until, on the accession of James to the throne, one of his first acts was to authorise the magistrates of the burgh to retain their offices without being re-elected; for it was too evident that a new election would have seen the persecuted Covenanters placed in power; and to prevent this, in 1686, "all elections of magistrates were discharged during His Majesty's pleasure!"

The next year (1687) the council, with servile meanness, forwarded a most fulsome letter to his Majesty, containing many and great professions of loyalty; but in the year following, when it became plain that the reign of that stubborn bigot, James, was rapidly drawing to a close, and that the sceptre was slipping from his grasp, this entry occurs on the 4th of October, and before the landing of the Prince of Orange: "Mr. James Stevenson, Apothecary in Air, engages to hire ane man sufficiently furnished with horse and arms to attend his Majesty, and to be rendezvoused in Glasgow under the command of the Earl of Cassillis, which the Magistrates do out of their zeal

for his Majesty." The burgh at the same time applied for arms, so that it might be put in a state of defence in case the adherents of King James should rise and make a stand in his favour.

The existing memorials of the Covenanters in Ayr, and of the times of the persecution, are not many, and of an humble kind, if we except the Church already mentioned, and which, as stated, was erected during the time of Cromwell's usurpation. Eight prisoners taken at Pentland in 1666 were tried, condemned, and sent to Ayr to be executed; but as we have already seen, when speaking of the Irvine martyrs, the common executioner refused to hang men whom he considered guiltless, and so, as there is generally one black sheep in every flock, one of their own number, Cornelius Anderson, agreed to save his own life by hanging the other seven, besides those at Irvine. When we read of how "he was kept intoxicate till the execution was over," we see that at least *some* must occasionally have fought in the ranks of the Covenanters who were not contending for "Christ's crown and covenant" from pure motives; and we feel inclined, even yet, to pay a tribute to the boys of Ayr of that period, when we read how that, "when he came off the gibbet the boys and others stoned him out of the town."

An humble monument to these seven martyrs stands in the old churchyard, on the south-west side of the

church, on which is the following inscription, which we give in its defective grammar and orthography :—

Here lie the Corps
of
James Smith, Alex^r McMillan,
James McMillan John Short,
George McKertny, Jno Graham,
and John Muirhead who
Suffered Martyrdom at AIR 27th
Dec^{br} 1666 For their Adherence
to the Word of God and Scotlands
Covenanted work of Reformation.

This Small Tribute to the Above
was done by the Incorporate
Trades of AIR Anno Domonic 1814
For the Righteous shall be kept
in everlasting remembrance.

On the other side of the stone are these lines :

Here lyse seven Martyrs for our Covenants
A sacred number of triumphant Saints
Pontius McAdam th' unjust Sentence past.
What is his own the world shall know at last
And Herod Drummond caus'd their Heads affix
Heav'n keeps a record of the sixty six.
Boots, thumbkins, gibbets were in fash'on then.
LORD let us never see such Days again.

Within three paces of this stone, and a little to the south, is a smaller headstone, on which there is a curious poetical inscription, which is impressive and hope-inspiring, and, notwithstanding its bad grammar, is not without some ray of poetic genius. Although comparatively modern, the stone, like a great many in this churchyard, is decaying fast, though some pains have recently been taken to preserve it. The little

stone points out the last resting-place of a mariner named Robert Cairns, and on the north side are these lines :

Though Boras blasts and raging waves
 has toss me too and fro
Yet at the last by God's decree
 I harbour here below
Where at an anchor I do rest
 With many of our Fleet
Hopeing for to set sail again
 Our Admiral Christ to meet.

It is a quiet and retired spot where these martyrs and all the dead here lie, although the din and the roar of busy life is heard (though not discordantly, because of the distance) away behind, and also away across the broad clear river to the north and east. But save this subdued hum, no sound is heard save now and again the soft and quietplash of the crystal waters of the classic Ayr, which flow on and on for ever, "another yet the same," and which, just as they do now, must have gone gliding on their ever-living way to join the all-devouring sea, which is near at hand, on that sad day when these "seven martyrs of the covenant" were laid down in their graves here,—the glory, and yet the shame of Scotland,—and then, and ever since, this fairest stream of the West has "murmured dirges round their grave."

Eighteen years after these martyrs had been murdered and laid in the grave, another witness for the truth and champion of liberty was put to death here.

Andrew M'Gill, belonging to the parish of Ballantrae (whose father was a farmer there, and whose house was afterwards plundered by the then “human blood-hounds of the earth,” and himself and another son subjected to much suffering) was apprehended and put to death for his non-conformity. The gallows on which he was hanged stood at some little distance to the south-west of what, in the Sandgate, was formerly known as the Ayrshire Bank, and this ground having long since been built upon, the stone, which in the “Cloud of Witnesses,” we are told was laid over his grave, has long since disappeared. The account given in that work is this—

“Upon a stone lying beside the gallows of Air, upon the body of Andrew M'Gill, who was apprehended by the information of Andrew Tom, who suffered there, November, 1684.

Then follows the inscription, which must have been the work not only of an educated person, but a poet as well; for not only is its versification correct, but there is a fine cadence as well as a great beauty and appropriateness of expression in this best of all the epitaphs of the Covenanting era.

“Near this abhorred Tree a sufferer lies,
Who chus'd to fall, that falling Truth might rise,
His station could advance no costly deed,
Save giving up a Life, the Lord did need.
When Christ shall vindicate His Way He'll cast
The Doom that was pronounced in such a haste,
And Incorruption shall forget Disgrace,
Design'd by the Interment in this place.”

Although every now and again, as we are told, some devoted pilgrim comes in search of this martyr's stone, and with calm, though sad and solemn looks, lingers about the place, yet we cannot help contrasting the few stray visitors to the martyr's humble shrine with the thousands who come annually—and some of them from the ends of the earth—to view the birth-place of the poet Burns on the banks of the Doon, hardly three miles to the west. With some, doubtless, it is the beauty of the scene which attracts them to the place, for a fairer spot the earth has hardly to show; although we fear that many get into ecstasies of delight about such rubbish of his as "The Holy Fair" (which, save the opening stanzas, contains not one ray of poetry, while it closes in gross obscenity), who cherish not one thankful memory of the martyrs of the Covenant, whose unsubdued spirits and dauntless struggles won for them, and for posterity, the inestimable privileges of civil and religious liberty which all of us now enjoy.

When we speak thus of Robert Burns, let it not be thought that we have no high opinion of him as a poet. We have formed the very highest opinion of the unfortunate bard's genius, and of many of his productions; although, while we consider his songs to be by far the best the world has ever seen, we do not think that, apart from these, a dozen of his non-lyrical poems are at all super-excellent; whilst his satires are

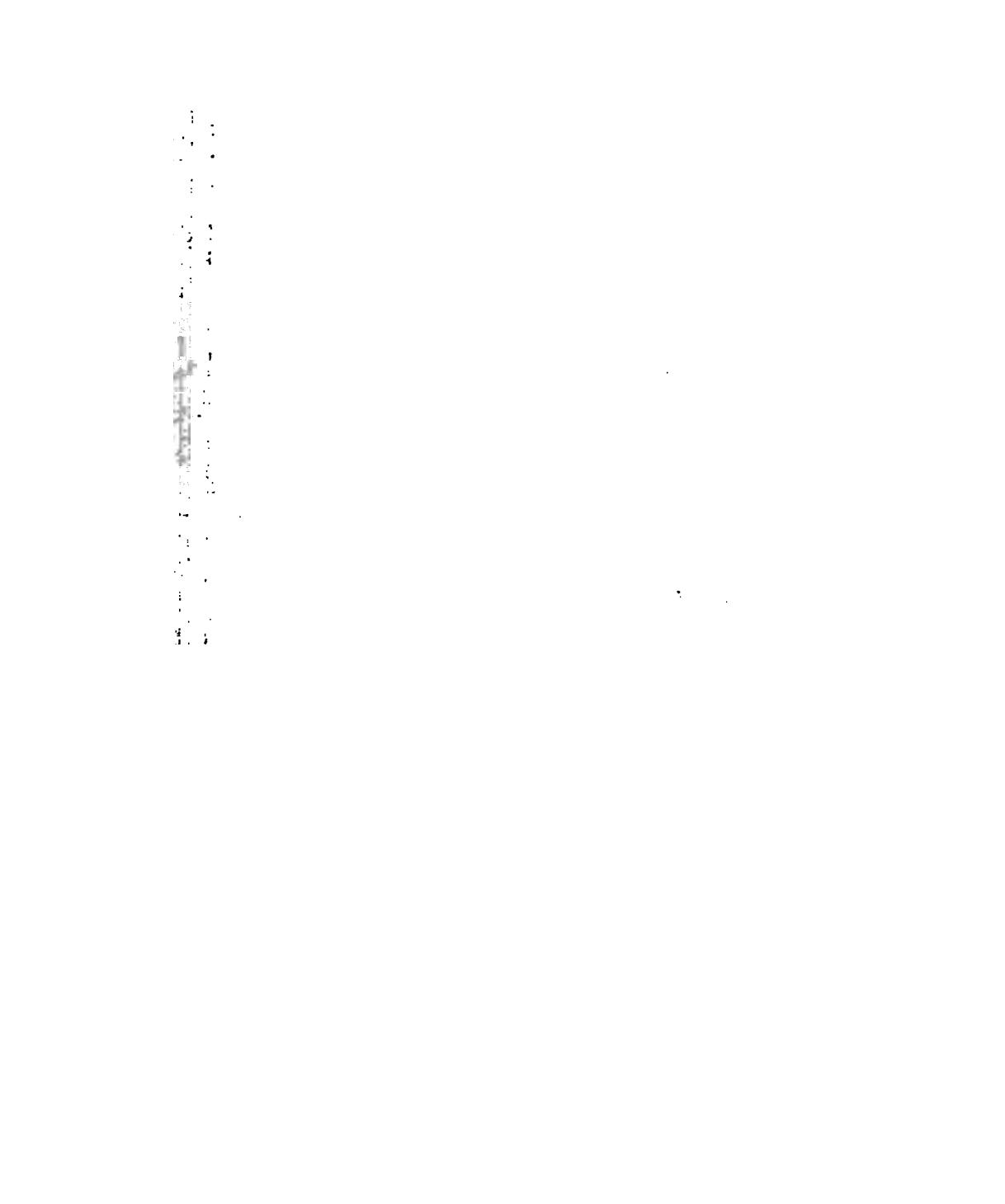
too often coarse, irreverent, and overdrawn; and it is a painful circumstance that these, and those of his productions which, to say the very least of it, border upon the indecent and immoral, are by far the most popular with the masses. But as his deepest sympathies were ever with the honest sons of toil, the poor and the oppressed, it is not to be wondered at that these are always his most ardent admirers; and doubtless it is their lack of education, literary culture, and of a lofty and pure moral refinement, which make them always admire most the worst productions of this most popular of all the poets of the people. The faults of Burns were, however, in a great measure those of the age in which he lived, and far be it from us to breathe a sentence which would tend to sully his memory; especially when we consider how greatly he purified and ennobled the song literature of his country, and how admirably the sentiments embodied in his own songs are suited to men in every condition of life. How the home-sick exile, with a tremulous voice and a tear in his eye, sings of "Craigieburn," and the "Banks and Braes of Bonnie Doon," the soldier on a distant shore of "When Wild War's Deadly Blast was Blawn," and the poor, oppressed, but honest man, of how "A Man's a Man for a' That."

Although saying little, and perhaps thinking seldom of the long dark period of persecution to which the Covenanters were subjected, yet he could not be in-

sensible of how much posterity is indebted to them, and to their heroic, and ultimately triumphant struggles for liberty and truth, when he wrote these lines :

“ The Solemn League and Covenant
Cost Scotland blood—cost Scotland tears ;
But it seal’d Freedom’s sacred cause—
If thou’rt a slave, indulge thy sneers.”





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